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AINSLER'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. XXXI. No. 5

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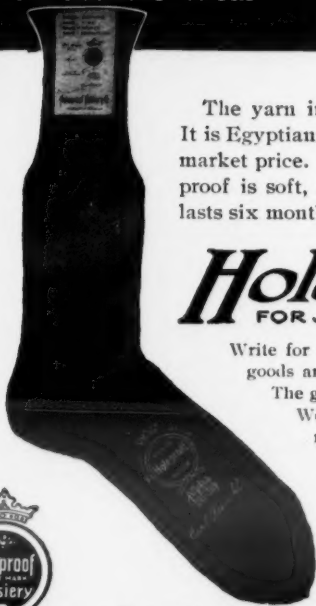
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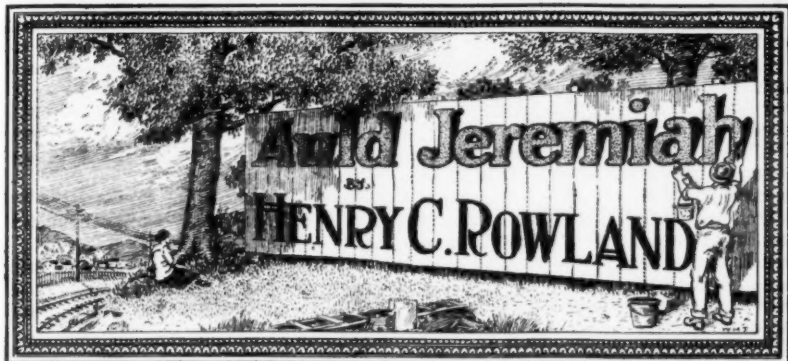
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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXXI.

JUNE, 1913.

No. 5



OLD Jeremiah Wishart had been told that he was dying, and was glad of it. He said that he had no desire to live longer in a world that contained so many fools. Besides this, he was beginning to hate himself almost as much as he hated everybody else, and it seemed to him that he could feel the paralysis creeping up his withered body as the Fundy tide might have crept up that of some unfortunate Passamaquoddy staked out on the flats by his tribal enemies.

There was only one thing about the business that bothered Jeremiah, and that was the disposition of the enormous fortune that he had accumulated at the cost of his fellow man. He had never married, had no immediate family, and, with one exception, hated his relatives even more than he did the rest of the world; and that was saying a great deal.

This one exception was a scapegrace nephew who had already gone through a large fortune of his own, exhausted

the forbearance of friends and family, and had recently passed through bankruptcy. His name was Archibald Wishart Loveday, and he was the only son of Jeremiah's only sister, whom Jeremiah had always intensely disliked.

Archibald's father had been a buyer of Scotch woolen goods for a large New York clothing concern, of which he later became the head. Finding himself an orphan at twenty-two, Archie had sold out his inherited interest, and spent the proceeds with impartiality in a number of foreign countries. The last cipher being clipped from its preceding figure, Archibald, who was possessed of consummate cheek and a rather overdeveloped sense of humor, went to his uncle.

"Uncle Jerry," said he, "I'm broke."
"I'm glad to hear it."

Jeremiah spoke the truth. Both his pleasure and profit in life had come from seeing other people lose their money. Also, he had sincerely hated his brother-in-law, and it pleased him to think that the fortune acquired by

that gentleman should have been so quickly dissipated.

"I thought that you would be," said Archibald cheerfully. "That's one of the reasons I had for coming to tell you about it."

"And what may the other be?"

"The other is that I've got a loft full of my pictures, and thought that maybe you might like to buy 'em."

"Oh, did ye now? And what will you be askin' for yon masterpieces?"

"Seeing that you are my uncle," said Archibald, "I will let you have them at your own price. You see, Uncle Jerry, nobody else will have 'em at any price."

"Y'are a good salesman. Well, then, ye can take your pictures and go to the devil!"

Archibald shook his head. "That's too slow a way of getting there, uncle. This is really the chance of your lifetime. Just think what a pleasure it would be to leave them to your friends and relatives."

Old Jeremiah's face twisted into the best that it could do for a grin. Like others of his harsh breed, he was not without a sense of grim, sardonic humor. The idea tickled him. He bent his bushy brows on the immaculate young man.

"Y'are not such a fool as ye look, young man. I will gi'e ye five dollars apiece for the lot."

"Done with you!" said Archie. "I'll bring 'em around to-morrow. Did I hear you ask me to have a drink, Uncle Jerry?"

Old Jeremiah touched his bell. "Bring the whusky," he growled to the footman.

The following day, as old Jeremiah sat in his invalid's chair, looking out from his open window like some battered, captive eagle, he saw a large van turn the corner of Fifth Avenue, and his eyesight being of the best, even at that long range, he discovered Archie perched aloft beside the driver, a bull-necked Irishman.

Both were smoking large, black cigars, and as they approached the house both looked up at his window and grinned. Archie flourished his hand.

Then the van disappeared under the window sill, and Jeremiah heard a lusty "Whoa!" as its progress was arrested. A minute or two later Archie entered the room, cheerful and immaculate as ever.

"And what's all this in the van?" snapped Jeremiah, with a disagreeable sensation of having been beaten on a deal.

"My work of the last five years, uncle, which I am letting you have at an enormous sacrifice. I have been a very prolific painter, you know, so if there should possibly be more pictures than you happen to have friends, you can leave the balance to the Museum of Art."

"How many of the daubs have ye there?" asked Jeremiah almost shrinkingly.

"Five hundred and eighty-three, uncle—and I've thrown in a number of sketches and studies for good measure."

"Five hunder' and eighty-three." Jeremiah half closed his sunken eyes. "That is two thousand nine hundred and fifteen dollars I will be owin' ye. Give me a pen and my check book in the desk beyond."

Archie did so with alacrity. The old man wrote the check, blotted it, and tossed it to his nephew with a grunt, then eyed the young man like a hawk about to strike.

"I suppose ye think 'tis a smart trick ye have played on a dyin' man?"

"Well," said Archie modestly, "I don't like to boast, but I can't think at this moment of anybody else that could get the best of Jeremiah Wishart, sick or well. And as for dying, you will probably live to plant the bonny, bonny heather on little Archie's grave."

"And what makes ye think that?"

"Because the doctors say you are done for, and doctors are fools."

Old Jeremiah brightened perceptibly. "Will ye have a drop whusky?" he asked.

Archie leaned forward, raising one hand to his ear. "Was it an angel that spoke?" he asked. "Really, uncle, if

you startle me like that, I may have to agree with the doctors, after all."

The whisky was ordered, and old Jeremiah watched his graceless nephew's appreciation of the "auld peet rick" with obvious envy. Presently said he:

"Now, list to me, ye sassenach. Y're full o' sinful pride because ye think ye have trimmed an auld man on a business deal. But ye must perceive there's twa sides to the story.~ Now that I see ye have a bit o' your faither's cheap commercial abeility, I am minded to cut ye oot o' my will. I might e'en leave ye yon silly daubs. What would ye be sayin' then?"

"I'd say that I'd got nearly three thousand more than I ever expected, uncle," said Archie cheerfully. "You see," he added engagingly, "I have never counted on anything from you, because I am painfully aware that you disapprove of my pleasant mode of life. That's the reason we're such good friends." And he smiled beatifically at the shrunken old invalid. "And now, if you will excuse me, uncle, I will run out and pay some bills."

"And who are ye goin' to pay?"

"A few decent tradespeople who never dunned me. When I have done that, I will have to look around for a job."

"And what can ye do, then, besides spendin' other people's money?"

"I might get a job as athletic instructor, or riding master, or chauffeur, or billposter, or something of the sort. One can never tell what talents one may develop under pressure."

"Your bills can wait," said the old man. "Show me some of the rubbish ye brought in the van."

"With pleasure, uncle." Archie left the room, to return a few minutes later carrying several of his canvases, which he set down face to the wall. Drawing down the shade, he took the first, and put it on a table.

"This, uncle, is a Breton peasant girl bathing in a brook. As a matter of fact, they never do bathe, but I detest realism."

"One would never guess it! Are ye

not ashamed? Losh! Show me another."

Archie set the picture aside, and presented another masterpiece.

"Here we have some nymphs and satyrs at play. Observe the virginal freshness of the nymphs. This one in the foreground has not got the small-pox; that mottled appearance is due to the shadows of the leaves. And observe the expression of bestiality on the face of the satyr."

"I obsaffve the bestiality of the whole dommed thing. Shame on ye! What is that next—a forest fire?"

"No; that is a study of the Alpen-glow in the Bernese Oberland."

"'Tis a wonder it does not melt the snow. And what is that ye have there, all arms and legs? Some girls in a railroad accident?"

"Wrong again, uncle. That is the Mardi gras carnival at Nice. Do you feel able to stand some more?"

"I do not. Ye have swindled me. Who now could I leave such nastiness to? But I will not say ye have not some trick of the paintin'. Why do ye not turn your hand to signs?"

Archie paused in the act of turning his artistic efforts to the wall, and stared at the old man. His blue eyes opened very wide.

"By George, uncle, I believe ye've struck it! Signs—the very thing! I believe I could paint a rattling sign. It's worth looking into. Well, good-by, uncle. *Signs*, by Jove!" And with a little wave of his hand, the young man moved toward the door.

But Jeremiah called him back. While disapproving his graceless nephew from the very bottom of his soured, crabbed old heart, he was yet strangely loath to have him go.

"Sit down," he growled. "I would like some words wi' ye. Help yourself to the whusky. Tell me now, have ye never thought of marryin'?"

"Never when I could help it, uncle."

"The more shame to ye! If ye had a wife now, 'tis possible I might leave ye a bit, provided the woman was not a fool, which is not likely."

"Right, uncle. She'd have to be a fool to marry me."

"I see ye understand yourself. That is always somethin'. I make no secret, Archie, I am bothered what to do with my millions."

"There is my Cousin David——"

"Augh! A cantin', psalm-singin' hypocrite!"

"And there is always charity."

"Do not try to provoke me. No cent of mine goes to pauperize the masses."

"Well, then, civic institutions, public parks, a fund for the spiritual enlightenment of the undeserving rich, or a society for the prevention of cruelty to household pests, a whisky fund for indigent alcoholics—really, uncle, there are no end of worthy endowments. You might establish a guild for the promulgation of joy, and make me sole trustee. Do it now. I'm sure we could work splendidly together. All you'd have to do would be to die—though I must say I'm afraid I'd beat you to it."

"You glory in your iniquity, now, do ye not?"

"I glory in having a good time. But I'm afraid it will be a good while before I sing any more hallelujahs," said Archie sadly. "Anything more I can do for you, uncle?"

"No. Get out of here. What is it—a girl?"

"I hope so—if she hasn't got tired of waiting."

"Then off wi' ye, and play the fool. I've had enough o' ye," growled the old man. And Archie went.

CHAPTER II.

Old Jeremiah was in his reclining chair by the open window—for the month was June—when a footman entered with a note and a card. Jeremiah glanced at the latter, which was printed, not engraved, and bore the name "Miss Ailsa Graeme."

Jeremiah grunted. "Ailsa Graeme!" said he to himself. "I wonder now is she any kin to Donald Graeme, of Dornoch?"

For it was to this same Donald

Graeme, of Dornoch, that Jeremiah owed his start in life. Donald Graeme had loaned him the money to go to America when a lad of seventeen. It was in Donald's little machine shop on the Firth of Dornoch that Jeremiah had first learned how to forge and weld the glowing steel that was afterward to forge and weld his great fortune.

The money debt had long since been paid, for Jeremiah was scrupulous about his debts, whether of good or ill. But he had always felt that the moral obligation was still unsettled; and if he had not heard that Donald had himself become a rich man, it is probable that he would have remembered him in his will, for no man could say that Donald was shiftless or a fool. It was, therefore, with a throb of interest that Jeremiah opened the letter, to read as follows:

MY DEAR JERRY: (If I can make bold to call you by the old name, now that you are become a great millionaire.)

It is many years since I penned you a line, and as you can see from this feeble scrawl, my old flipper has not the steadiness it had when it last gripped yours. They tell me you have come to be a rich man and a power in the land. For many years I did none so badly myself, but later on in life, what with strikes and the hard times and family troubles, it has all been taken from me, so that now I am, but a broken old man who must soon leave this sinful world as poor as he came into it.

But it is not about myself that I would write you, doing well enough as I am and content with my wee cottage and my chair before the fire with a pipe and perhaps a nip of the auld peat rick. I write to introduce to you my dear granddaughter, Ailsa, who, as you will see, is as sweet a Hieland lassie as ever you might wish to see, and who must go to the new country to seek her fortune, there being little here but what you know.

The lassie has been the comfort of my declining years, and it grieves me to let her go, as it does her to leave me. But as I have still her Sister Nell I cannot refuse, the more so as Ailsa is a lassie out of the common, both in her attainments, character, and good sound sense. There is none in all our Hieland country can show her aught of housewifely duties nor make a shilling go so far as can her sixpence. She has the education, too, and the arts as well, for did she not paint a picture of the sunset on the purple heather which was sold in the Edinburgh exhibition for ten guineas? Also, she knows

the music and can even coax a tune from the pipes.

Now she has gone to America, wishing to better herself as well as to see the world, and—between you and me—perhaps to escape the unwelcome attentions of the young Laird of Oykeell, whom I am thinking she would be well away from. So if you can help to find her an opening as governess or the like, you will be doing a favor to your old friend and well-wisher.

DONALD GRAEME.

Jeremiah laid the letter down, and sat for a moment plunged in meditation. So long he sat with his cavernous old eyes focused on infinity that the manservant shifted his weight to the other foot. Jeremiah settled himself in his chair.

"Ye will show the lady up," said he. "Here—turn my chair a bit before ye go."

A minute passed. Then from outside the door came that most unprecedented of sounds in Jeremiah's household—the rustle of a gown. "Miss Graeme, sir," said the footman, and withdrew. The old man looked up, and his deep eyes kindled.

On the threshold stood a girl of twenty, perhaps, with eyes of the clear blue-gray of a Scotch sky, a ruddy coloring that suggested the crisp tang of a sea mist, and a strong, long-limbed, rounded figure that brought back to Jeremiah the girls of his youth. She was straight as the mast of a North Sea fishing smack, full of bosom, broad of hip, but supple and long-waisted, with something that suggested the rush of strong, keen air. She wore a plain suit of light-gray tweed, with a straw hat of a color to match her suit, and her heavy auburn hair was held snugly in place by a light veil of gray tulle.

As her eyes met those of Jeremiah, the rich color flooded her face, and she dropped a little curtsy. He noticed that her nose was short and straight, with a slight upward tilt, and that her mouth was wide, with full, red lips slightly inclined to part enough to show a double row of white, even teeth.

"And so y'are Donald's granddaughter?" said Jeremiah. "Come in, my dear, and close the door behind ye."

"Thank you, sir," said Ailsa, and

gave the old man a smile that warmed him more than his rich port. Rather shyly, she took the chair that Jeremiah indicated, sitting well forward, with her gloved fingers interlaced.

"And how is your grandfather?" asked Jeremiah.

"His health is good, thank you kindly, but he is sadly broken in spirit, what with the loss of his fortune and family troubles. You must know, sir, that he has now the bringing up of Uncle Sandy's five children."

"And who may Uncle Sandy be?"

"Uncle Sandy was grandfather's second son. The wife died when little Donald was born, and not long after Uncle Sandy was drowned in trying to save a man who fell into the water at Inverness. Since then grandfather has had to do for all of us, as my Sister Nell and I are orphans, too. That is one reason for my coming to America."

"And how did your grandfather come to be losin' his fortune?" asked Jeremiah.

"It would take a long time for the telling, sir. There were strikes and higher wages and strong competition and a partner who did not deal honestly by him. Then grandfather was getting old, and after Uncle Sandy was drowned there was nobody at all to take his place. The troubles all came together, sir."

Ailsa's voice was rich, rather low in pitch, and her English held a lingering Scotch accent that fell like music on the old man's ear. Her manner was respectful—a trifle shy, perhaps, but quite free of any trace of timidity—and her blue-gray eyes looked frankly into his as she spoke. Jeremiah sighed.

"Tis the same old story," said he; "but I am sorry to hear that it should have come to Donald. A fine, braw lad he was, and no man's fool. Aweel—and so ye have come to America to seek your fortune?" His keen old eyes bored into hers. "Tell me, now, have ye never thought o' marryin'?"

The girl's vivid coloring was heightened by a richer flush.

"I have thought more of working, sir," she answered.

"But y'are still heart free?" asked Jeremiah.

"Oh, yes, sir." She smiled, and a dimple appeared at the corner of her mouth. "I will not say that if the right man were to come along I might not have him," said she naively. "But it is not for that that I am here."

Jeremiah nodded. "Y'are a sensible lassie, 'tis plain enough to see," he observed. "Now, listen to me, Ailsa. I am minded to find ye a husband."

Ailsa dropped her eyes. "You are very good, sir," said she; "but, if I might make bold to say so, I would rather you found me some way to earn a little for the grandfather and the children."

Jeremiah rested his large, shrunken hands on the arms of his chair, and leaned slightly forward. Ailsa, glancing at him, was a little frightened at the expression of his face.

"My dear," said Jeremiah, "if ye will be guided by me in the choosin' of a husband, ye need have no fear for the grandfather and the children. I see y'are a sensible girl, and I will make no bones of the business. I have a nephew to whom I am thinkin' of leavin' the bulk of my fortune—a matter of some four million pounds. Mind ye, now, four million pounds is not to be sneezed at. But without he is married to a good, sensible woman—like yourself, for instance—he would soon play ducks and drakes with it, and I am in no mind to see the wealth I have toiled and slaved for thrown here and yon to the parasites that hang always on the heels of a rich man.

"I am old, my child, and my success in life has come from the gift I have for understandin' the people with whom I have had to deal. I have talked to ye but five minutes by the clock, but I know ye well, and that you would make a fine wife for the lad. Now, what do you say?"

He leaned back in his chair, his eyes bright, and a faint flush on his sunken cheeks. Ailsa was staring at him with wide eyes and a pale, almost frightened,

face. But the Scotch girl was not to be dismayed.

"God bless you, sir!" she answered. "But I have never seen the gentleman, nor he me. No doubt he would have none of me."

"If he wouldn't," snapped Jeremiah, "he is a fool, and can scratch for himself. I will do nothin' for him."

Ailsa was silent for a moment. The high color came back to her cheeks, and she seemed to be struggling to repress a smile, succeeding in all but the telltale dimple at the corner of her demure mouth.

"And what is he like?" she managed to ask.

Old Jeremiah gave his bleak, twisted smile.

"I see y'are no fool," said he, with as much approval in his voice as it was possible for it to carry of so unaccustomed a tone. "Well, then, he is some inches taller than yourself, broad of shoulder, and big of chest, and I have never seen his face when it did not wear a grin. His hair is black, and his eyes are blue, and as for nose and teeth and arms and legs and all, he has his share. The women like him, I am told; and so did the men until he began to borrow money. Now they will have none of him, and they are right, for has he not just gone through somethin' like half a million dollars left him by his father, who was a fool?"

"And does he drink?"

Jeremiah chuckled. "I like ye more and more," said he. "To be sure, he drinks; but that is not his failin'. I have never heard of his bein' drunk."

"And what is his failin' then, sir?" Ailsa's eyes were bright with interest.

"He paints. Naked women and the like. But 'twould not be hard for ye to break him of that. He is also a vagabone, trailin' all over the world with no reason but to be on the move. He has never done a day's work in his life, and I misdoubt he ever will. Ye see, lassie, I am givin' ye his faults, because at this minute I cannot recall any of his virtues. I doubt he has any."

Ailsa dropped her flushed face in her hands, and her shoulders shook with the laughter she could no longer contain. Old Jeremiah regarded her well-shaped arms with approval, and the wry, twisted grin remained on his shrewd, thin mouth.

"Y'are amused?" said he.

She raised her flushed face. Her eyes were misty with mirth.

"Indeed, I do, not know if I am most amused or ashamed, sir," she answered. "And so 'tis your idea to give him the money to marry me? I have never heard the like. Could you not think now of one good trait he has, poor man?" She gave another rippling little laugh. "Can't he paint?"

"He cannot."

"Perhaps he is kind of heart?"

"That is a weakness for a man who must make his way in the world. He has it. I mind one day he came in here with a cur that he had picked up on the street, and gave my butler five dollars to care for the beast. It is here yet. I kept it, as it was good at the rat catchin'. You see, my dear, I am givin' the devil his due. I will not go so far as to say that there may not be good qualities to the lad which a proper wife might develop."

Ailsa looked at him thoughtfully.

"Was there ever the like?" said she. "But you must know, Mr. Wishart, that it is quite impossible he should care for me——"

"And why? Y'are a fine, sensible girl, and no so bad to look at. Besides, there is the four million pounds—twenty million dollars in sound securities. Many a man has tumbled head over heels in love for less."

"But I am only a Scotch country girl of the middle class, who has seen nothing of the world, barring only Edinburgh, where I had my education. He would look down upon me. And, besides, I might not like him."

"Aweel," said Jeremiah, a little testily. "ye will have a chance to find out. I will have ye both here for luncheon with me to-morrow at one. Where are ye stoppin', and how are ye fixed for siller?"

"I am stopping with a relative who lives in Brooklyn. She met me at the steamer. I came from Glasgow on the *Anchoria* the day before yesterday. And as for money, I have enough to last until I find a place as governess or teacher. You would not be knowing of any opening, sir?"

Jeremiah frowned. "And what is the matter with the openin' I have proposed to ye?" he asked. "However, we will talk of that later. I am tired now, my dear." He turned to her, and she saw that his face was pale and haggard. "Ye must know that I have not much longer here"—he raised his hand as she opened her lips—"and before I go I wish to see Archie settled in life. So you will leave me now, and come here to-morrow for luncheon at one."

Ailsa rose. "You will not tell him, will you?" she asked.

"Not until after you are gone to-morrow. Once you have met, you must decide for yourselves. I wash my hands of the business. You will have my offer to take or leave as seems good to you."

Ailsa wished him good-by, when Jeremiah touched his bell, and the footman came to show her out.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Archibald Wishart Loveday received his uncle's invitation to luncheon with surprise and a considerable amount of pleasure. It was a long time since old Jeremiah had so honored him, and it seemed to Archie to augur well for the future. He knew that his uncle most thoroughly disapproved of him, but what he never so much as faintly suspected was that the crabbed old multimillionaire secretly liked him and enjoyed his company.

More than this, Archie was convinced that his picture deal had quite blasted any lingering possibility of his figuring by any chance in his uncle's will. What disposition the old man might make of his enormous fortune Archie had not the faintest idea, but rather expected that, outside of a few small legacies, the bulk of it would go to dis-

tant relatives in Scotland whom the old man had never seen, and therefore had no particular reason to despise.

There might also, for all Archie knew, be friends in the old country whom Jeremiah had esteemed in his youth before his nature had become warped and soured by the struggle for financial supremacy. The young man had heard it said by the millionaire's more intimate associates that as he aged his heart and mind were turning more and more to the land of his birth, and that the feebleness following a stroke of paralysis was all that had prevented his return to bonny Scotland, there to finish his declining years.

Had Archie been less sorely pressed for money, he would never have ventured to victimize the old man in the matter of his works of art, for while there is life there is hope, and of course it lay within the bounds of human possibility that Jeremiah might relent at the eleventh hour and throw a contemptuous bone to the only child of his only sister; and Archie, who was no fool where his own interests were not at stake, was of the belief that if there was any one thing that would rouse his uncle's bitter resentment it would be the fact of getting beaten in a commercial deal. But Archie had been in desperate straits for cash; his credit was utterly ruined, and his pride prevented any further appeal to friends or family.

By a queer streak of perversity which was not unmixed with a certain ironic humor, Archie, in showing his pictures to the old man, had picked out of the whole collection the very worst, both in execution and morale. As a matter of fact, the young man was really an artist of fair ability, his best and favorite work confining itself to landscapes and nature studies, which did not, however, include the nude. But his work, like that of so many other painters, just lacked the touch that might lift it above mediocrity and render it marketable; and, being a poor salesman of his own wares, Archie had never sold a picture. He said that his Scotch conscience would not permit.

The unfortunate part of the present business was that Archie had in his collection some really meritable things, among them being two or three large canvases painted about Dornoch, whither he had once wandered out of curiosity to see the old home of his mother's family. The place itself had charmed him, and lent itself readily to his *genre* of work, but the people he quickly came to detest.

Had he got to know them better, they might have come to inspire him with liking and admiration, for Archie's nature was one that speedily developed friendships. Unfortunately one or two encounters with individuals of that peculiar surliness which provincial Scotland is so able to produce occurred in the early part of Archie's visit, for if his nature was warm, so was his temper; and Archie left the place thoroughly abominating its local inhabitants.

The men he considered as sodden masses of envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness; the women, when elderly, bitter, shrewish, and avaricious; and when young, blowsy, coarse, and lacking in grace. This latter viewpoint was further enhanced by an inspection of the mob of feminine jute operatives who work in the big factories of Dundee.

Now, if Archie had considered his own interests sufficiently to have shown his homesick old uncle the really honest and attractive work that he had done in and about Dornoch, it is possible that the old man, who knew really nothing of painting, would have found much therein to touch and gratify him, for Archie's work, though faulty in technique, was of a pleasing and decided quality. His marines, for instance, were such as one might see hanging over the desk of the superintendent of a towing company, illustrative, and true to detail. He affected to despise realism, but was, as a matter of fact, an unconscious realist. And old Jeremiah would have found in the pictures just the details that would have appealed to him, and would no doubt have considered the works as of much

more pronounced merit than most European masterpieces.

However, the trick was done; and Archie, having thus deliberately spited his own interests, was, as has been said, considerably surprised at his luncheon invitation. Jeremiah had made no mention of a third person, and Archie therefore concluded that the old man must be bored or lonely, and wanted somebody to amuse or quarrel with him.

"Well, uncle," said Archie, as he entered, "you are looking more cheerful to-day."

This was so manifestly untrue as to verge on impudence, for Jeremiah's face wore such an expression as had made more than one big financier quail in his boots. He glanced up as his nephew spoke, and at the same moment the young man discovered that the table was set for three.

"Hello!" said he. "Who is the third place for?"

"'Tis set for another fool," snapped the old man. "A young lady from Dornoch who had need of help—like all the folk that come here."

Archie's face fell. Jeremiah noticed it, and his look of rancor was intensified.

"Ye need have no fear," said he, in his harsh, sneering voice. "She has telephoned that she cannot come. The silly fool she is stoppin' with is aillin', or some such twassle. Sit ye down; y'are late, as usual."

Archie, whose appetite nothing could daunt, obeyed with cheerful alacrity, when, at a sign from his uncle, the luncheon was served. As the last of many little clams was slipping down his throat, old Jeremiah, who had been regarding him enviously, observed:

"Ye have the digestion of an ostrich—now, have ye not? 'Tis a good thing for ye. No doubt your food will not be of the best hereafter."

"No doubt, uncle. But probably my appetite will be even better, if such a thing is possible."

"And have ye paid your debts?"

"Some of 'em. About a thousand dollars' worth. It was such a shock

to the dealers that I rather hesitate about paying the rest. Don't want to be the cause of heart disease."

"And have ye found a job?"

"I'm thinking of going on the stage."

"H'm! Low comedy, belike."

"No; the ten-cent-admittance kind that runs up and down Fifth Avenue. That's the only way left for me to collect anything from my friends."

"Augh! Must ye always be actin' the idiot?"

"'Fraid so, uncle. Idiots are born, not made. You see, I was born under the Foolish Star, just as you were born under Saturn." And a high tide of excellent Amontillado flooded the many little clams.

The conversation proceeded somewhat in this way while Archie was being fed, for Jeremiah was on a strict diet that might have proved interesting to cows and chickens. But as the young man's excellent meal reached its conclusion, the old man's sneering irony became less bitter, precisely as if it were he, and not Archie, who had made a satisfying and delicious repast. In fact, while the coffee was being served, his tone became so agreeable that Archie grew suspicious. He was beginning to wonder if his uncle was going to ask him to cancel the picture deal with what money still remained to him, when old Jeremiah asked suavely:

"Ye have made a good meal, lad?"

"Never better, uncle. It's a pity that your chef's talents should waste their fragrance on the desert air. I'll come again, if you like."

"Archie, man," said Jeremiah impressively, "ye may have many such if ye will listen to your dyin' old uncle. I am minded to leave you—twenty—million—dollars."

Archie stared, and the fifty-cent cigar—for Jeremiah was no miser in his own household—dropped from his nerveless fingers.

"Uncle Jerry," he cried, stooping to recover it, "don't jolt a man like that. Start with twenty thousand, and work up."

"Twenty million, I said, Archie—and

twenty millions it shall be. But a condition goes with it."

"I'll stop, uncle."

"Stop what?"

"Anything. All of 'em."

"Ye need stop nothin', lad. What I want is for you to begin. I have found a wife for ye."

Archie stared wildly at his uncle. Jeremiah's eyes would have made a three-carat diamond look like a piece of putty.

"A wife!" cried Archie, and glanced instinctively toward the door. "Good Lord, uncle, I don't want a wife!"

"Ye may not want one, but ye need one."

"No, I don't, uncle. Honestly. Anybody that knows me will tell you the same. Look here, uncle, what do you know about it, anyhow? You never had one."

"No. If I had, I would not be botherin' my head about yours. Look ye now—do you need twenty million dollars?"

"Not with a wife stirred up in it," said Archie decidedly. "Who is she?"

"She is a Dornoch lass, the granddaughter of an old friend."

Archie shuddered, and spilled some cognac into his glass.

"What does she look like?" he asked, fascinated by the very horror of the idea.

"She is none so bad. No doubt she has the normal number of teeth and eyes and arms and the like. You must e'en judge for yourself. I will not say, though, that she is very punctilious about the keepin' of engagements, as she was to have been here to-day. When I got her message on the telephone, I was minded to call the whole thing off."

"I would, uncle," said Archie earnestly. "A person who fails to keep an engagement is not a person to be depended upon. With all my faults, I never fail to keep an engagement—"

"Especially when there is good eatin' and drinkin' at the other end."

"In any case. Life for me would be a dreary desert with a person who was

careless about keeping engagements. The only time I ever failed in this way myself was once when I didn't show up. I'd call it off, uncle; really I would. And if you like we'll compromise for ten millions—without the wife."

"'Tis no matter for jokin', Archie," said the old man; and nobody looking at his face could doubt that he meant it. "I am in earnest about this. At least, ye will have a look at the lassie?"

Archie groaned in spirit. A Dornoch lass! His mind, with its characteristic perversity, flitted to the least attractive type, to him, of all the Scotch girls that he had seen. He pictured a strapping, red-faced wench, with aggressive gums, uncouth speech, chapped of skin, with thick wrists and ankles, and a swagger of obtrusive hips as she walked.

He looked at his uncle. Jeremiah's face suggested a steel trap with a highly active intelligence. Archie was seized with panic.

"Does she know about this, uncle?" he asked helplessly.

"She does."

"And what does she say?"

"What would any girl with a grain of sense be apt to say? And it is sense ye need in a wife, Archie, havin' none of your own to transmit to your bairns. I'll consider it if the gentleman pleases me," says she, or words to that effect."

"If the gentleman pleases me!" repeated Archie, fascinated with horror. He could seem to see her as she said it, stolid, yet with a flattered peasant vanity. "Did she say 'gentleman,' uncle?"

"She did—knowin' nothin' of you and your habits. I tell ye, man, the girl has sense. It is in her family. There was nothin' of the fool in her old grandfather, who was an iron worker of Dornoch, and later of Inverness."

"And did you import her to mate with me?" asked Archie, a flush beginning to creep up into his lean, handsome face.

"I did not. I would not serve any girl so ill, least of all an honest Dor-

noch lass. One would think ye were a crown prince to hear you talk. She came to seek her fortune, teachin' or the like, and I saw at once she would be the ideal wife for you. I wish to do somethin' for the girl, and I do not like to break the bulk of the fortune I have made, but I will not leave it to a man I know would squander it before ever I was cold. As you know, I have no love for your Cousin David, and so I have chosen you to be my heir on the condition I have stated. Such a girl as this would make a man of ye, Archie. You will see her, will ye not?"

Archie shook his head despondently.

"What's the use, uncle? It would only be to hurt her feelings. You can't expect to mate a man as if he were a blooded horse."

"And is that your last word?" asked Jeremiah, in a voice of ominous calm.

"'Fraid it is, uncle. If she didn't know about the arrangement, I wouldn't mind seeing her, but I'm hanged if I will under the circumstances."

"And the twenty million dollars?"

Archie's hot blood began to mount. "Hang it all, uncle," said he, and there was a ring of impatience in his voice, "I'm not a man to be sold into slavery! I could have married for money plenty of times if I'd wanted to—and could yet. More than that, I could marry a girl of my own class, of whom I might be proud. What's the use of marrying the daughter of some Highland blacksmith—"

Jeremiah turned upon him a livid face. "Stop where y'are, sir!" said he harshly. "And who are you, then, to be holdin' yoursel' so high? The beggared son of a clothes dealer, and the grandson of auld Archibald Wishart, who passed his days knittin' stockings while watchin' his bit flock o' sheep on the moors! So y'are too good for the daughter of auld Donald Graeme, the honest ironmaster? Verra weel!" In his excitement, Jeremiah sometimes lapsed into the broad Scotch of his youth. "Verra weel, sir. Go, then—to the de'il, for aught I care—and let me see your smirkin' face nae mair! Ye'll think different when ye find yersel' in

rags, and naught but a crust to put in your wame. Go, sir!"

And Archie went.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. David Archibald Wishart—so named from a thrifty old bachelor uncle, who was expected to make him his heir, but did not—was a young man whose dual object in life was wealth and respectability. The latter quality he was quite content to maintain as it already stood, but the limit to his ambition for the former could be compassed only by the bright blue sky.

David was the eldest son of old Jeremiah's brother, who had followed the example of his senior in emigrating to America some few years later. Starting as a clerk in a stockbroker's office, he had managed to secure enough of his brother's business in time to enable him to become a member of the firm, when, by thrift and a plodding industry, he had managed to accumulate quite a respectable fortune, and in due time to become the head of a respected and conservative business house.

David was the mediocre son of a mediocre father. The commonplace is apt to beget its kind, just as genius is apt to reproduce its opposite, based perhaps on the principle that the product of the means is equal to the product of the extremes. David looked, thought, felt, and behaved like his father, to the entire satisfaction of them both.

Wishart, senior, was the head of the firm; Wishart, junior, the tail, in a manner of speaking. Wishart, senior, rode a large bay gelding each morning before breakfast in the park, passed the contribution box in the main aisle of the church, was superintendent of the Sabbath school. Wishart, junior, rode a polo pony before breakfast in the park, passed the contribution box in a small side aisle of the church, and taught a Bible class. Wishart, senior, was tall and heavy, and wore a mustache and beard. Wishart, junior, was tall, and would some day be heavy, and wore a mustache without the beard. When all is said and done, he was

merely a later planting of the same seed.

Both father and son stood in great awe of Jeremiah, and no doubt really felt that peculiar affection for him that one finds in the attitude of a mean-spirited, avaricious person for a rich relative. Jeremiah, for his part, held them both in supreme contempt, and a sort of fluctuating dislike, depending on his mood. The old man was an eagle—fierce, predatory, swift, looting as much for the pleasure of the raid as for the spoils thereof. His brother and nephew were merely barnyard hen hawks, venturing at times to seize an incautious hen, which they bore off promptly to their nest.

Both father and son knew of Jeremiah's sentiment for them, and deplored it, while not daring the effort to correct it. Jeremiah's satire could pierce any skin that was not actually petrified, and, social and religious infidel as he professed to be, he attacked his relatives at their most tender point—their respectability. In the matter of his will, he had treated them far more decently than either strictly deserved, for the simple reason that neither interested him sufficiently to arouse any particular emotion—such, for instance, as he felt toward Archie.

It was, therefore, with considerable surprise that David learned on returning to his office after lunch that Mr. Jeremiah Wishart had called him up on the phone, and wished him to call at the house at his very earliest convenience. Leaving instructions to call up Mr. Wishart's house to say that he was already on his way, David hurried to the street, jumped into a taxi, and sped away uptown.

Jeremiah greeted him with a brief nod. "Sit down," he growled. David did so. Jeremiah swung painfully in his chair, and stared at the young man out of his cavernous sockets in a way that suggested some beast of prey glaring from its cave.

"How old are ye?" he asked.

"Thirty, Uncle Jeremiah," answered David.

"Ye do not look it. A fine, temperate

man, are ye not? Y'are tall and broad, and beef to the heel. Never smoke, nor drink, nor—nor anny of those things. I know your kind. Now, tell me, have ye never thought of marryin', David, me man?"

"I hope some day to marry and perpetuate our good old Highland stock, Uncle Jeremiah; but up to this time I have not felt that I could afford it."

"I see. 'Tis an expensive luxury in these days, the rearin' of young Wisharts. Your Cousin Archie did not feel he could afford to tackle it for twenty million dollars."

"I'm afraid I don't quite get you, Uncle Jeremiah."

"Then I will make myself plain, as the auld wife said when she took off her wig. I have just offered your Cousin Archibald the bulk of my fortune if he would marry a girl of my choosin'. The gowk refused."

David's jaw dropped, and he stared at his uncle in startled dismay. The young man found himself utterly at a loss for what to say. Perhaps it was fortunate for him that he did, as both he and his father had often lamented the puzzling fact that any words of theirs were invariably wont to irritate Jeremiah.

"Ye see," continued the old man, "I was minded to make Archie my heir, not wishin' to break up the fortune, and because I never really disliked the lad, for all his folly. Besides that, he needs it, havin' gone through the scant savin's of his miserly father."

"A most excellent reason for not leaving him your fortune, I should have thought, Uncle Jeremiah."

"Oh, should ye, now?" sneered the old man. "Now, I advise ye to keep your thoughts to yourself, David, or I might be tempted to do it yet. For all his faults and foolishness, Archie is at least a man. But I was no such fool as to give him the money to squander as best pleased him—"

"Very wise of you, Unc—"

"Will ye no hauld your gawp until I finish? So, bein' interested in a fine young woman, the granddaughter of an auld friend, who has lost a decent for-

tun' through no fault o' his, I was minded to see the two married as soon as might be, and leave them the bulk of my estate——"

"But, Unc——"

"Haud your tongue, ye loon! Ye maun know I ha'e never likit ye, and I'm likin' ye less every minute! Anither ward may cost ye millions, mon. Archie and the girl were to meet here to-day, but the wench disappointed me, and when I broached the matter to Archie he would have none of it. So now he may scratch for himself for all o' me, and so I am minded to make you my heir in his place—if the girl will have ye, which I am inclined to doubt. Ye see, David, 'tis not that I like ye, but that Archie has failed me and the girl as well, for if the lad had seen her I'm thinkin' he would have felt different about it. Now, I am sick of the business, and wish to have done. If Ailsa Graeme will marry ye, I will make the two of ye my joint heirs. So what do ye say?"

David cleared his throat. "H'm!" said he, and buttoned his coat. "Does the young lady know of your plans, Uncle Jeremiah?"

"She does. But she does not know which of my nephews I had in mind—or that there was more than one, for that matter. I may have mentioned the name 'Archie,' but as you have yourself an Archibald in your name, that does not matter."

"And what did she think of the arrangement, if I may ask?"

"She is a sensible girl. She said that if the young man was pleasin' to her, and she to him, it might result in the makin' of a match—or words to that effect. Ye had best go see her, and talk it over between ye. I am sick of the business, and will have no more to do with it beyond leavin' ye both the fortun'. But ye'd best be quick, for the doctors tell me I have not long to last, and if y'are not married before I go the bulk of my fortun' will go across the water. Here is her address. Take it, and clear out, for I am tired, and wish to sleep."

David left the house in something of

a daze, going straight home, where he told the taxi to wait, and gave orders that the office be informed that business would keep him away for the rest of the afternoon. In the privacy of his room, he sat down for a moment to think.

His reflections were brief, their principal trend being that there was very little time to lose. Old Jeremiah had impressed him as a dying man, and David shuddered at the possibility of his going off before his matrimonial arrangements might be completed.

It was late in June, and Mr. and Mrs. Wishart had moved out to their country house on Long Island—Wishart, senior, going in and out of town every day on the train. David, who disliked the country, had preferred to remain in the city, running out only for the week-end. The following week, however, he would be compelled to move out to Bonny Brae, as the Wishart place was called, there to remain for about a month with his maternal grandmother, while Mr. and Mrs. Wishart were absent on their annual visit to Bar Harbor.

Yes, Uncle Jeremiah was right. There was no time to lose. David dressed with care, jumped into his waiting taxi, and set out for some vague address in Brooklyn. His destination proved to be on one of those dreary, forgotten side streets, where the grass sprouts up between the Belgian blocks, and the alanthus tree blooms with tropical luxuriance. The houses were small, but respectable, and the only sounds were the distant roar of traffic on some adjacent thoroughfare and the wail of babies with prickly heat floating dimly through the open windows.

Telling his driver to wait, David rang the bell, and a moment later the door was opened by a clean little girl with very bright, inquiring eyes and a pig-tail. David offered his card, which she took gingerly by one corner.

"Miss Graeme, if you please," said David.

"Yes, sir. She is upstairs with mother. I'll tell her." And the little girl made a dash for the stairs. Half-way there she suddenly remembered

herself, darted back, and opened the door of a small, sad room.

"Sit down, please, sir," said the little girl, and fled incontinently.

David entered the room, which was cool and dark. Stepping to the window, he drew back the shutters, then turned, and looked around him. The place was spotlessly clean, with haircloth furniture, a center table of Japanese inlay work, and a tiny fireplace, on the mantel of which was a sticky-looking clock under a bell-domed glass with a plush fringe around its edge. Above the clock was a large, framed photograph of a benignant-looking middle-aged man in the uniform of a marine engineer officer. There were also some of the curiosities that sailors pick up in their voyages.

"Evidently a seafaring household," said David to himself, and sat himself upon the haircloth sofa, from the inwards of which there came the bell-like vibration of rusty spiral springs.

The confectionery clock ticked off the minutes slowly and sadly, as if deploring the waste of the precious time that it was its mournful duty to register. "First time I ever knew one of those wretched things to go," said David to himself. The minute hand moved reluctantly through the arc of a quarter hour, and David's tension gave way to a lugubrious depression. It returned like the stringing of a bow at the sound of a rustle on the stair, and David was far from being a nervous man. He rose.

And then a delightful vision was framed in the narrow doorway. David was not an imaginative man, and had formed no mental image of his possible future bride, beyond the vague idea that she would probably coincide with her abode in being plain and dreary and of middle-class respectability. He was totally unprepared for this radiant girl, with her vivid coloring, wealth of glossy auburn hair, and tall, supple, deliciously rounded figure. She was dressed in a simple muslin gown, with a fringe of old lace about the neck and elbow sleeves.

For an instant David was actually

guilty of a stare; then, recovering himself, he bowed.

"Miss Graeme," said he, "I hope that you will pardon the informality of this call. I have just left my uncle, Mr. Wishart, who asked me to look you up immediately."

Ailsa, her face aflame, stepped inside the room, closing the door behind her.

"It is very kind of you, I am sure, Mr. Wishart," said she, in her low, rich voice, with its hint of a Highland accent. "Will you not sit down?"

She seated herself, and looked up at him with very wide gray eyes. David was, indeed, a fine figure of a man. Over six feet in height, with a big frame, like all the Wisharts, he was a personality that had never failed to command respect. His face, which was rather long, would have been handsome but for the eyes, which were set a trifle too close together, and a long, acquisitive nose. His type was, in fact, thoroughly that of his race; and as such Ailsa found it far from displeasing.

David reseated himself on the sofa, and leaned slightly forward, his elbow resting on one knee. At a little distance sat Ailsa, very erect, her hands tightly clasped, and her eyes dark with excitement.

"My uncle tells me," said David, speaking easily, and with a slight, reassuring smile, "that he has submitted to you what must seem to us both as a most extraordinary proposition."

"Now, is it not?" she answered, a little breathlessly. "I have never heard the like."

"Nor I," he answered. "And yet, Miss Graeme, from the old gentleman's point of view, it is all quite reasonable enough. You see, he is long past the age of understanding the emotions of younger people, and his whole life has been spent and his mind directed to but one single object—the acquiring of an enormous fortune. Now that he is nearing his end, he cannot bear to think of this fortune being shattered and dissipated."

"That is easy to understand," said Ailsa, whose natural clear-headedness was returned under David's Bible-class

manner. "But what I cannot understand is why he should ever have selected a simple Scotch country girl like me to—to—" She paused, blushing furiously.

"To be one of his cobeneficiaries?" asked David smoothly. "That also is not difficult when we confine ourselves to Uncle Jeremiah's viewpoint. A multimillionaire is in some respects like royalty. He represents what we might call a dynasty of power based on wealth. He is like a king, and his heir represents a financial crown prince. Like all other kings, he wishes to preserve his dynasty intact, and to assure himself of its succession. Consequently he demands the right of selecting what he feels shall prove a proper consort for his heir. But this, of course, is largely dependent on the personal desires of those selected. In these days, even actual royalties do not try to coerce their successors into alliances that are opposed to their own free wills."

Ailsa was silent, and looked down at the tips of her little shoes. She was thinking how different this fine young gentleman, with his elegant manner of speaking, was from the harum-scarum individual whom old Jeremiah had described. David slightly cleared his throat, and continued.

"In your case, Miss Graeme," said he, "the situation is peculiarly parallel to that which I have described, because, aside from your own very obvious attractions, you are the granddaughter of one of Uncle Jeremiah's oldest friends—perhaps his only friend—and you come of a stock that he admires and esteems. He abominates the usual type of American woman, whom he considers selfish, superficial, undomestic, and extravagant—and I am not sure but that I agree with him. I have certainly never seen one whom I would care to marry."

"Besides that, we both believe in pure strains. You are a Dornoch Graeme, and I am a Dornoch Wishart, though American born. But we are both of the good old Highland blood, and therefore what more natural than that

we should form this alliance? By this I do not mean that I should think of urging you to engage yourself to marry me until you have had the opportunity to know and understand, and find yourself in sympathy with me."

"And you with me," said Ailsa almost inaudibly. She raised her drooping head, and looked searchingly into David's eyes; and, cold as had always been the nature of the young man, he was conscious of a sudden acceleration of his pulse and a quickening of the breath. It startled him, and for the moment swept away the precise formality of his tone. Nothing, perhaps, could have better furthered his interests, as for the moment he found himself face to face with the first genuine emotion of his life, aside from that of greed, and spoke from the heart instead of from the head.

"Ailsa Graeme," said he, and his bass voice held an involuntary tremor, "I have seen you for a scant five minutes, but I tell you that, all material benefits aside, you are the first woman I have ever met whom I would want to make my wife."

Ailsa leaned forward, her face very pale. "Do you mean," she asked, "that you would be wishing to marry me if I had nothing but myself?"

"I do," said David hotly; and for the moment he meant it.

Ailsa's eyes fell. She began to trace patterns with the toe of her little shoe.

"It is very wonderful," she whispered. "I cannot understand it. Why should you? What can you find in me?"

"Sweetness and charm and a true, honest heart," said David. There was no longer need for diplomatic utterances. The thought that this lovely girl might soon be his roused all the desire of possession latent in his masculine, Gaelic nature. He rose from his seat, and took a step toward her.

Ailsa looked up quickly, and clasped her hands. Her face was frightened, almost terrified. This big, masterful personality moved her strangely, as she had never been moved before. And

yet—he frightened her also, as she had never been frightened before.

David saw the look, and restrained himself with an effort, for his arms were hungry for her. But he realized that here were great matters at stake. The chances are that if he had not realized it, and had refused to allow the cold wall of Jeremiah's millions to give him pause, he might have swept the girl off her feet, all aquiver as she was, in the rush of swiftly liberated passion, so long dormant in the man. He might have claimed her then and there, taking no negative answer, and moved by what was left in his nature of the old, predatory instincts of his ancestors, whirled her off in his taxi to the nearest official of due authority, and married her upon the spot.

But the sudden realization of all that was at stake halted David, as sometimes it has halted too calculating a general, who had only to charge home to secure the victory already in his grasp. The violence of his own emotion startled him, and he sank back upon the dingy, haircloth sofa.

"Forgive me, Miss Graeme," he said. "You see, I spoke from the heart. I am sorry if I frightened you. I should give you time to accustom yourself to this most unusual situation. Now, I have a plan. My mother shall write to you, and ask you to come out to visit us at our country place on Long Island. That will give you an opportunity to become acquainted with my people and myself."

"You are very kind," Ailsa murmured. She raised her face a little fearfully to his. "You will tell your mother?"

"Yes—and she will be delighted. She has been urging me to marry for the last three or four years, and she is bound to be charmed with you. Besides, mother is rather a worldly woman, I am afraid"—he smiled slightly—"and she will be tremendously pleased at the prospect of our being so well provided for. But of course you are under no obligation, and if you find on getting to know me better that you cannot bring yourself to care for

me enough to be my wife, you have only to say so, and remain my very good friend. Now I will go, and leave you to think the matter over."

He rose, and stood before her, tall, erect, masterful, smiling down at her with perfect friendliness. Ailsa rose also, and gave him her hand. David took it in his own, stooped, and brushed it lightly with his lips, then turned smartly on his heel, and the front door closed behind him.

CHAPTER V.

Old Jeremiah was in his habitual seat by the open window, watching, from want of better entertainment, the last stages in the demolition of a house directly opposite his own, when the footman entered, and offered him a card that bore the name of Miss Ailsa Graeme. It was over a fortnight since she had come to him with her letter of introduction, and Jeremiah had heard that she was visiting at his brother's summer home on Long Island.

"Ye will show the lady up," said he, wondering a little at the motive of the visit.

As Ailsa entered the room, the old man raised his shaggy eyebrows, and looked at her in surprise. Although the girl was dressed as on her previous visit, the keen eyes of Jeremiah detected immediately a subtle difference. There was no trace of the shy friendliness that had characterized her manner when he had seen her first. Ailsa held herself erect, and there was a certain combative expression about her blue-gray eyes and in the contour of the firm little chin.

"I wish ye good mornin'," said Jeremiah pleasantly enough. "And how is all goin' with ye, my dear? Take this chair by the window, so I will not have to twist my neck."

"You are looking better, Mr. Wish-art," said Ailsa, seating herself.

"I am feelin' a bit stronger, I thank ye. At times I think I may yet fool these medical frauds. The paralysis appears to be goin' down, rather than up."

"I am very glad to hear it. Mr. Wish-

art, I wish to ask you a few questions, if I may make so bold."

"As many as ye like. And how do you like it out there in the country?"

"They are all very kind," Ailsa answered a little shortly. "Mr. Wishart, when first you told me about Mr. David Wishart, did you not speak of him as 'Archie'?"

Jeremiah rubbed his stubby chin.

"I may have done so," he answered, and shot her a keen look from his hard old eyes, which seemed a little less sunken than before. "His middle name is 'Archibald.'"

"That is true. But nobody ever calls him anything but 'David.' But did you not also give me to understand that he was a spendthrift and a ne'er-do-weel, and that he had just gone through a fortune left him by his father?"

"Perhaps I may have been saying something of the sort," said Jeremiah, and squirmed a little in his chair.

A straight line drew itself between Ailsa's dark eyebrows, and she looked at the old man with an expression of mingled displeasure and bewilderment.

"You told me also," she continued, "that his face was never without a smile, that he painted for his pleasure, and that he was very fond of, or kind to, animals. Now, Mr. David never smiles except when he wants to be polite, or has said something rather disagreeable; he does not paint at all; and only yesterday I heard a dog yelping, and, looking out of my window, I saw Mr. David beating it unmercifully with his riding crop, all because the poor beastie had jumped up and muddled his cuff. Now, why did you tell me all those things, Mr. Wishart?"

Old Jeremiah wriggled uneasily in his chair. Ailsa watched him intently, and the puzzled expression in her eyes deepened.

"Aweel," said the old man, after a moment's hesitation, "I may as well confess. Ye must know, then, that David was not the husband I first picked for ye."

"What!" cried Ailsa, leaning forward, with parted red lips.

"No. Ye see, I have another nephew

—Archie Loveday by name. 'Twas to him I was minded to see you married, and 'twas him ye were to meet here at luncheon. Now, if ye had kept your engagement, as by rights ye should have done at any cost, all would have been well, and no doubt ye would have been a wife by now, for Archie is no procrastinator like yon sanctimonious fool, David. As ye were not here, I broached the subject to him, and he would have none of it."

"Ah-h-h!" Ailsa let her breath out slowly. The high color mounted to her eyes. Jeremiah looked at her, then quickly out of the window.

"So—he would have none of me?" said she slowly.

"He would have none of it—the marryin'," Jeremiah snapped. "Now, if ye had kept——"

"Then where does David come in?" she interrupted.

"He cam' in just after Archie had gone out. He gave me some of his lip——"

"Who—David?"

"David? No fear! 'Twas Archie answered me to my face, and that I will tak' from no man. Ye must know, I was displeased with the two of ye, so when David cam' in I told him what had happened, and that I was done wi' Archie, and that he might tak' his place. No doubt he will mak' ye a better husband than Archie, who was always a restless body."

"No," said Ailsa quietly, "I do not agree with you, Mr. Wishart." She rose.

"What is pressin' ye?" asked the old man querulously.

"I must meet Mrs. Wishart. We are going out together. You see, we came in for the day to do some shopping, and I just ran in to ask you to clear up some things that puzzled me. Good afternoon, Mr. Wishart."

"Wait a bit. Y'are not angry?"

"Indeed, and what right have I to be angry?" Ailsa's voice was cool and limpid as lake water. "It is not every girl who is given the chance to marry four million pounds, Mr. Wishart. I wish you good afternoon."

With a grunt, old Jeremiah touched his bell, and the footman saw the angry beauty to the door.

For Ailsa was in a towering rage. She felt that she could have boxed the ears of this crafty old brute, who, as it seemed to the girl, had cold-bloodedly bought her for the perpetuation of his money and his race. She felt that he had bought her as one might buy a domestic animal, and given her to a nephew whom he despised, without so much as his blessing, but with a premium of four million pounds. And that sum had been the sole incentive of David's indecent haste to claim her and seal the bargain.

Hot tears of mortification welled up in her eyes. She had been traded in like any other live stock, duped and shamed. The worst of it was that David had known that she had been previously offered to his cousin, who, although a ruined man, had tossed aside his uncle's offer with anger and contempt, and in so doing had voluntarily sacrificed any hopes of an inheritance.

The whole affair, as Ailsa saw it now, was far worse than she had anticipated. She had thought it probable that old Jeremiah had, in describing his nephew to her, craftily endowed him with qualities that he imagined might appeal to her romantic sense. That she might possibly have forgiven. But to be offered to one man, cast aside, then snapped up by the second choice was more than the girl's proud Highland spirit could endure.

For a moment she was tempted to go straight back to the house of her relative, and write to Mrs. Wishart, requesting that her things be sent to her there. But this, she felt, would be unworthy of her. Besides, she wanted to have it out with David, and to tell him what she thought of him.

This much she knew—whatever the young man's initial motive had been, he was now as much in love with her for herself as was possible for a man of his cold, calculating nature. He had brought his punishment upon himself, and Ailsa meant to see that he got it in full measure.

There was also David's family to consider. Mrs. Wishart had been very kind to her in her rather worldly way, though Ailsa, who was not lacking in imagination and an instinctive estimate of people, could imagine what her attitude might have been had she not been herself a prospective heiress.

Wherefore she resolutely winked back the tears, met Mrs. Wishart as had been arranged, and went out with her to Bonny Brae. It was a Saturday, and David was waiting on the veranda when they arrived at about five o'clock.

"So here you are at last!" said he. "Come, Ailsa, we've just got time for a little walk before dressing."

"If you will wait a minute," she answered, not looking at him, "I should like to change my shoes."

"All right. Don't be long."

As Ailsa went up to her room, her mind was working swiftly. It was no easy thing that she had set herself to do. For nearly a week now she had been tacitly regarded as David's fiancée, although she had not as yet pledged herself to him. Considering the shortness of their acquaintance, none of the rest of the family were inclined to urge any haste in the matter, the more so as it had been reported that old Jeremiah's illness had taken a turn for the better.

Therefore, as the matter stood, Ailsa was considered as virtually betrothed, and therefore a daughter of the house. Aside from the great fortune that was to come into the immediate family, the Wisharts had to congratulate themselves on the charming personality of their prospective daughter-in-law.

Ailsa knew that they liked and admired her, and as she paused, her foot half in her shoe, and thought of the consternation that she was presently to cause, her heart almost failed her, and she wished that she had yielded to her first impulse, and fled to the refuge of her relative's house immediately on leaving the head of the family.

But the thing had got to be gone through with, so she set her square little jaw, laced up her stout walking

shoes, picked up a dog whip, and, whistling to a large Airedale who had attached himself to her person almost immediately on her arrival at Bonny Brae, went down to join David, who was striding up and down impatiently.

"Would you like to walk through the pines?" he asked.

"Wherever you would be wishing to go," she answered.

They crossed the lawn with Mac, the Airedale terrier, bounding at Ailsa's side, with a wary eye upon David. Dogs and children quickly learned to give David a wide berth.

Following the highway for a short distance, they turned presently into a lane that led through an extensive piece of woods, principally pine and cedar. For a while they strolled on in silence, each one deep in thought, and trying to determine the best manner of expressing that which was on the mind. David finally broke the silence.

"Don't you think, Ailsa," said he, in his heavy voice, "that we might announce our engagement pretty soon?"

"I am learning for the first time that we are engaged," said Ailsa, trying to steady her voice.

David shot her a questioning look.

"I thought it was practically understood," said he.

"That is not what I am thinking myself," she answered.

"But what do you mean, Ailsa? Surely you do not contemplate refusing to marry me?"

Ailsa hesitated. In her first flush of anger on learning the truth from Jeremiah, she had ardently desired just such an opening to tell David precisely what she thought of him and his methods. But in the time that had elapsed since then, the righteous indignation that would have nerved her for such a scene had cooled considerably, and although still smarting at the idea of the part that she had been tricked into playing, she found it very difficult to say what was in her mind. Though not lacking in courage, she had always been the least bit afraid of David; and, now that the moment had arrived for expressing herself plainly, she asked no more

than to get out of the business as easily and with as little ill feeling as possible.

"When you came first to see me," said she, "you told me that if, when we became better acquainted, I found that I could never care for you in the way that a girl should care for the man she means to marry, I should only have to say so, and you would be content to remain my friend. Well, then, David, you must know that I can never care for you enough to marry you, so there is the end of it all."

David stopped short in his tracks, stared at her for an instant, then strode on, with his thin lips set like a vise. Ailsa was forced to quicken her steps almost to a run to keep pace with him.

"And when did you arrive at this conclusion?" he asked presently, staring straight ahead.

"The day I looked from my window and saw you beating Mac," she answered. "But there are other reasons why I could never care for you, if you are wishing to know them." Now that the battle was on, Ailsa felt her courage returning.

"They would be very interesting," David answered curtly.

"Well, then, you must know that you are not at all the man your uncle described to me." She threw him a furtive, sidelong glance. David was striding along, his face rather pale, his lips sucked in, and his stony eyes staring straight ahead.

"Indeed! And how is that?"

"When I asked him what this nephew was like that he wished me to marry, he said that he was a ne'er-do-weel and a vagabond who had already gone through one fortune and was waiting only the chance to go through another. He said that he frittered away his time with the painting, and that his habits were not of the best—"

David's head turned sharply on his shoulders, like the head of an eagle. "And is that the sort of husband you prefer to me?" he asked harshly.

"He said also," Ailsa went on, "that his lips were never without a smile, and that his heart was kind—especially

to animals. Now, where could he have got all those ideas?"

David shot her a quick look of suspicion. Ailsa's face was as artless as the little woodland lane they followed. David shrugged.

"He is an old man in his dotage," he answered sullenly. "I have a worthless fool of a cousin who answers that general description. No doubt he got us mixed. Now, see here, Ailsa, do you realize what you are saying?"

"At the least, I am telling the truth," she answered.

He gave her another quick look. The girl's face was a little pale, and her chin was set doggedly. David plowed ahead. The dog, as if sensing some ugly emotion, kept close to Ailsa's side.

"See here," said David, "do you realize that you are juggling with the chance of a lifetime? All sentiment aside, just stop to consider what it means for us to marry. You would be so rich as to find it impossible to spend a quarter of your income. Think of what you could do for your grandfather and your Sister Nell and your five cousins—and any other of your friends and relatives. You could buy your grandfather an estate, and marry your sister to the son of an earl if you chose, and give the children the best of educations, and start them all in life.

"Money is power, no matter what fools say about the beauties of poverty. And as for love"—he turned and looked at her with deep fires in his somber eyes—"I offer you the best that I am capable of, and you must feel that at least it is sincere."

Ailsa's breath came quickly. For a moment she seemed to hesitate. David was quick to profit by her indecision.

"We must not always think of ourselves alone," said he. "Even if you do not love me at this moment, there have been plenty of cases where love came after marriage, and why not in yours? I should make you a kind and faithful husband, Ailsa. Every day I have come to love you more, and if I am sometimes harsh and rough it is simply because my life has had no softening influence. I am a business man,

and that in this country means a wolf running with the pack. The slightest sign of weakness, and one is down for the others to rip and tear. Come, Ailsa——"

He reached for her hand, but the girl drew back, frightened, yet fascinated. Against her knee she felt a low vibration as Mac crowded close, his hackles lifting slightly, and his pale eyes fixed on David. Neither noticed the dog.

But David was making the fight of his life. It is possible that for the moment he actually thought less of the money stake than of his hunger for the fresh, lovely girl whom he had already come to consider as his own. Yet he did not lose his head or forget to play his hand to its fullest potential value. He flung out both his hands—and again the low rumble vibrated against Ailsa's knee. Instinctively she reached down and touched the dog's head with the butt of the heavy dog whip.

"Listen to me, Ailsa! Even if you can't care for me now, I am sure that I can bring you to do so some day. As for this money, I'll admit that that is what appealed to me at first, but only until I met you. As it stands now, I will give you my word to deed it all to you the day that we are married, if only you will deed yourself to me.

"And think again what you can do with it. Don't you think that there are times in the lives of us all when we are called upon to make a personal sacrifice of our feelings for the sake of those we love—and who love us? Alone, what can you do to help your relatives? Let me tell you that even a girl with a technical business education is often hard put to it merely to support herself in these days. You can't afford to let your relatives suffer poverty, can you? Don't you consider it your duty to make this sacrifice?"

Ailsa quivered. Then she looked at David, and a little shudder ran through her supple body. He saw it, and it infuriated him, robbed him of his self-control. With a quick movement, he turned, caught her in his arms, drew her to him in a grasp that stifled her

breath, and crushed his lips against hers; and as he did so there came a snarl from beneath, and David was conscious of a tearing pain in the muscles of his leg. Yet in the heat of his passion he ignored it, and tightened his clasp on the struggling girl.

In his arms, Ailsa was raging like a fury. "Let me go!" she panted. "Oh, you brute—you beast—you cad—let go!"

Strong as she was, she wrenched herself away; then, stepping quickly back, with blazing eyes, she raised the heavy dog whip, and lashed him with all her strength across the face. The shock of the blow staggered him, and Ailsa sprang away. David recovered himself, and seemed about to rush upon her.

"Look out!" she screamed. "The dog!"

David paused. His face was livid, and his eyes murderous. But as they fell upon the Airedale, crouched at Ailsa's feet, his flanks quivering for a spring, this time at the throat, the man drew back. David possessed that constitutional fear of dogs peculiar to some men who are afraid of little else.

For a moment he stood there, glaring at the girl; and as Ailsa watched him, sick with horror, she saw the purple weal left by the lash draw itself across his pallid face. Then, without a word, he turned on his heel, and strode blindly back up the lane.

CHAPTER VI.

For several moments Ailsa stood where he had left her, the dog crouching at her feet. David did not look back. When his big figure had disappeared around a bend, Ailsa sank weakly to the ground, and covered her face with her hands. Mac wriggled to her, and laid his head upon her knee.

How long she remained there she could not have told. Her mind was in a whirl, and refused to act clearly or logically. Her one cognate idea was that after what had happened she could never face the Wisharts as a guest in their house.

Presently she raised her head, and looked around. The shadows were lengthening, and she realized that it was getting late. The thought occurred that when she did not return somebody would come to look for her; and, seized with a sudden panic, she got up, and turned directly into the woods.

She knew that the railroad was about three miles from the Wishart place, and as she was gifted with a good sense of direction, it seemed to her that she could find her way through the woods and fields to the little town and the railroad station. Her one idea was now to get back to Brooklyn.

The underbrush was thick, and the going difficult, but she pushed ahead, feeling sure that the woods must presently end, and that she would come out into open country, where she might be able to look about and get an idea of her location. But at the end of what seemed to her at least an hour, she found herself still in the tangle. To make matters worse, the long summer twilight was beginning to fade.

Had it not been for Mac, Ailsa would have been thoroughly scared, as her ideas of American forests were what might have been expected of a newly arrived girl from the north of Scotland. For all she knew, the place might abound in dangerous characters or beasts of prey.

At length, after what seemed to her an interminable nightmare, she saw an opening ahead, and struggled on with renewed courage, only to come out a few moments later on the edge of what appeared to be a marsh, or an inlet from the Sound. It was a sad, desolate spot, with a narrow channel running between a stretch of mud flats, and fringed about the edges with reeds. So far as she could see, her progress was absolutely blocked, and, thoroughly disheartened, she dropped down at the foot of a tree, and burst into tears.

But the darkness was not far away, and she struggled to her feet, and started to make her way along the edge of the morass, or creek, or whatever it might be, for she realized that once the darkness overtook her she would

have to spend the night in the dreary place.

The light was growing obscure when she saw, some distance ahead of her, resting on the mud, what appeared to be a fishing boat of about twenty tons. Thinking that there might be somebody aboard the boat who would show her the way out of the place, she hurried down to the edge of the creek opposite where it lay.

Her tremulous hail brought no response, but she saw, a little farther on, a long skiff tied to a bush, and at the same time discovered that the water was flowing into the place and beginning to submerge the flats. Being a longshore lass, she realized that the tide was rising, and that it would not be long before she would be able to paddle out to the smack.

"At any rate," she thought, "that will be better than spending the night in the wood. Nothing can get me out there, and if the fishermen come they can take me back to civilization." Ailsa's knowledge of fishermen was of the hearty North Sea type, but she was not far wrong in her estimate of them as a class.

She sat down, and waited for the incoming tide to reach the skiff. The shadows deepened, and overhead a pale, tiny star winked feebly in a sky of deepest Prussian blue. Mysterious whisperings came from the sedge, and a great heron drifted past, to light on the farther side of the morass. Far in the distance she heard the whistle of a locomotive, but this seemed infinitely remote. At her feet the water was rising fast, and it did not seem so very long before she found that she could move the skiff. She got aboard, closely followed by Mac, and, having cast off the painter, poled easily out to the smack.

It proved to be a stanch enough old tub, with a little cabin in the after end. The hatch was unlocked, so, after calling once or twice and then sending Mac to investigate the dark interior, Ailsa went below. Groping blindly about, her hand fell presently upon a tin box filled with matches. She struck one, and as

it flamed up saw a lamp set in gimbals on the fore bulkhead. This she lighted, and looked about at her refuge. The place was stripped of practically everything, and the lockers contained not so much as a biscuit; but in one of the bare bunks was a patched old sail. Crawling in between its bights, Ailsa stretched herself out with a sigh of relief, and was almost instantly asleep.

When she awoke, the sun was blazing in through the open hatch. She crawled out of the bight of the moldy-smelling sail, and, followed by the frisking Mac, went up on deck. She discovered immediately that she had no time to lose if she did not wish to be a prisoner for several hours, as the tide was running swiftly out of the place, and there was barely water enough left over the flats to float the skiff.

However, she managed to reach the bank on the far side of the creek, where she left the skiff for its owner to secure as best he might. It occurred to the girl that this was rather a poor return for her shelter, and she was seriously considering paddling back aboard to leave a piece of money on the table, when it occurred to her, with a shock of dismay, that she was penniless.

This discovery frightened and bewildered her. What was she to do? Here she was, a long way from the city, without a person to whom she could appeal, and not a cent of money. Moreover, she was sharply hungry, having had neither dinner nor breakfast. She sat down to think.

"I must find the village," she said to herself, "and then go to the inn and send to the Wisharts' for my things. In the meantime, if I come upon a farmhouse I will beg a glass of milk."

Remembering the direction of the locomotive whistle that she had heard the night before, she set out through the woods again, presently to strike a footpath that came out on a broad expanse of open meadows. Half a mile ahead a line of telegraph poles and the unsightly backs of a row of signboards marked the railway, and as Ailsa looked she saw a wagon proceeding parallel to it. In the distance were

some houses, which appeared to indicate the edge of a community. Here and there on the flat, open landscape were also some scattered farm buildings.

Following the path, Ailsa cut straight across the meadows for the road, coming out directly upon the row of signboards. Approaching one of them from the rear, she heard a merry whistling, and on passing around the end of the cumbersome affair beheld a young man in a long linen blouse perched upon a stepladder and painting away with a vigor that suggested a full quota of health and good spirits. As Ailsa appeared within his range of vision, he glanced around from his work, and she saw that he was broad of shoulder, with a lean face, of which the well-shaped features and pleasing expression were ornamented by sundry flecks of paint.

"Good morning!" said he pleasantly, and returned to his work. "A fine summer morning for either exercise or art." This last remark was addressed to the sign, which was more than two-thirds finished, and which represented a large herd of cleanly cattle; in the foreground a rotund Alderney submitted gracefully to the caress of an equally clean and healthy milkmaid.

"Good morning!" returned Ailsa. "Can you tell me the name of that town over there?"

"That is scarcely a town," replied the sign painter, without pausing in his work. "In fact, it is rather a name than a place. I believe it is called Lucerne, probably because it is low and flat."

"Do you know is there a hotel there?"

He shot her a quick glance. "Not one that you would care to patronize," he answered. Something about Ailsa's face seemed to hold his eyes, which was not surprising, as it had suddenly gone white, due no doubt to faintness from lack of food. "Are you feeling ill?" he asked, and descended quickly from his ladder.

"No," she answered. "That is, I'm—I'm hungry." And she winked back the tears that had risen suddenly to her eyes.

"Hungry—good Lord!" The sign painter looked as much shocked as if she had told him that she was shot or stabbed. "Sit right down there on my coat," said he, "and we will mighty soon correct that." And he picked up what Ailsa had taken to be one of his tins of paint, but which, when opened and spread out, proved to be a most elaborate collation, comprising ham and chicken sandwiches, a boiled potato, cheese, pickles, and a quarter section of apple pie.

"There!" said the sign painter, spreading out the array on a piece of plank which he had wrenched, with the output of considerable muscular strength, from a rival signboard. "When you have finished that, it will be time for lunch. Then, if you care to have me, I will escort you to the metropolis of this desert, which is about four miles down the track. Here is also a bottle of very good beer. One cannot eat cold things without beer."

"But this is your lunch," Ailsa protested.

"It does not matter, as I am getting on so fast with my canvas—I mean, my board—that I shall be finished long before lunch time. What you do not want we will give to your dog. He appears to be interested in the layout."

Having said which, he picked up his brushes, and mounted his ladder, and for several minutes the air was filled with nice fresh paint.

Ailsa did not any longer demur. Having quenched her thirst with a satisfying draft of beer from the tin cup that served as a top for the lunch pail, she fell to upon the sandwiches, and was sure that she had never tasted anything so truly delicious. The wing and breast of a chicken followed, when Mac came in for a share. Perched on the top of his ladder, the sign painter continued to work and whistle, never so much as looking around until Ailsa, with a little sigh of satisfaction, remarked:

"I never tasted anything so good in all my life. I don't know how I can ever thank you."

"You have thanked me enough by ap-

preciating my poor hospitality," he replied, glancing back over his shoulder. "Give those other sandwiches to the dog."

"But you might be needing them yourself."

For answer, the sign painter descended from his ladder, picked up the sandwiches, and tossed them one by one to the expectant Mac, who received them thankfully, with two bites and a swallow for each, then looked up, wagged his stump of a tail, and said "Woof!"

"That means 'Thank you,'" said Ailsa. "And I've drunk all your beer," she added regretfully. "Mac had a drink from a ditch."

"I have done the same myself," said the young man. He glanced at his picture, backed off several yards, and studied it again, his head a little on one side. "What do you think of it?" he asked.

"It is far better than most," said the girl truthfully.

"That is to damn it with faint praise," he replied. "Do you happen to paint yourself?"

"A little," she admitted.

"Really? Then you might give me a criticism. You must remember that my audiences pass quickly in trains, so I try to concentrate on the more striking features—such as the carmine cheeks of the milkmaid."

"Why have you made that cow in the background sitting down like a dog?" asked the girl.

"She is not sitting down," said the artist. "She is getting up. What are you laughing at?"

"'Tis plain you are from the town," said Ailsa. "A cow does not get up that way. She gets up hind end first."

The sign painter's eyes opened wide, and Ailsa observed that they were of a very attractive shade of blue. He slapped his thigh.

"By Jove, but you're right!" said he. "Wait a minute." And he set off across the field.

"Where are you going?"

"Be right back," he called over his shoulder. "You see those cows lying

down over there? I'm going to stir 'em up, and see how they go about it."

Ailsa sank back on the grass, dropped her face in her hands, and laughed until the tears came. Looking up, she saw the artist approach the resting cattle, then stop short as they arose, and study their upward evolutions with the deepest interest. This accomplished, he trotted back.

"Just a mental note," said he. "I say, are you in any hurry?"

"Not particularly," she answered, wondering a little that he had not asked her any questions about herself.

"Then would you mind lending me your face for about five minutes?"

"Lending you my face!" Ailsa exclaimed, with a backward step.

"Yes—for this milkmaid of mine. She looks too much like a suffragette."

Ailsa's rich laugh pealed out, and the sign painter smiled sympathetically.

"Of course I will," she answered.

"Thanks awfully. Stand just as you are, please."

With swift, rapid strokes that showed a considerable knowledge of technique, he proceeded to convert the stony-faced milkmaid into a strikingly pretty girl. As the last touches were laid in, he climbed down from his ladder, walked back a few paces, and surveyed his work with a grunt of satisfaction.

"There!" said he. "That's something like. There is nothing that possesses the advertising value of a pretty girl. That will make the smoking-car bunch forget its bridge. Now for Buttercup in the background. Lucky for me you came along. You see, this is to advertise the Alfalfa Dairy Products, so called because there's not a spear of alfalfa within a thousand miles. I paint in the letters last."

He was rummaging among his paints as he spoke, and looked up suddenly with a low whistle of dismay.

"What's the matter?" Ailsa asked. She was beginning to feel very much at home with this eccentric artist.

"I've come off without my green paint. I loaned it last night to the farmer at whose house I slept, to paint his cellar doors, and the chump forgot

to return it. I say, would you very much mind watching this duffle while I run down here to the store and see what I can get? I've really got to paint out Buttercup. If our clients were to see her sitting there like Old Dog Tray it might arouse some suspicion as to the purity of the Alfalfa Dairy stock. Would you?"

"Of course not. I have plenty of time."

"Thanks awfully. I'll be back in fifteen minutes."

He started off on a trot down the road, but at the end of fifty yards pulled up short.

"I say," he called back, "what if a tramp should come along?"

"I'm not afraid," she answered. "I have Mac to protect me."

"Good! I won't be gone long." And he was off again.

Ailsa gazed curiously after the athletic figure running lightly down the road, then turned to an inspection of the sign. It was really uncommonly good, she was forced to admit, and she wondered how it was that a man of such apparent intelligence and knowledge of his craft could be content with sign painting. Indeed, he impressed her as quite the gentleman.

His tact in resuming his work while she was satisfying her hunger, and his offering the remains of the luncheon to Mac, as if to assure her that he really was not inconvenienced by the loss of his meal, touched Ailsa. An American girl would have perceived immediately that the young man was of a class far above his occupation, but Ailsa had been given to understand that the native-born American held himself to be the equal of any, and tried to live up to these standards.

Studying the sign, she presently discovered that the figure of the milkmaid was not as well drawn as it might be. The middle of the torso was thrust too far forward for the position of the feet, which gave the figure as a whole an unattractive, stumpy look.

Acting on a sudden impulse, Ailsa picked up a brush, wiped the handle on a piece of paper, and set to work. She

had once done some work on a fresco for a big hotel in London which an acquaintance of hers had been commissioned to paint; but that had not been difficult, as it was taken off from a preliminary sketch and squared to scale. Nevertheless, she had no difficulty in correcting the shape of the milkmaid, and with such success that from a rather strong resemblance to a lady in the act of turning a back handspring she became a swaying, willowy Evangeline, or a Mary "calling the cattle hame across the sands o' Dee."

She had just finished her retouching when, far in the distance, she discovered the sign painter on his return. Slipping down from the ladder, she re-seated herself on the edge of the bank, and watched him. He was still running lightly, and a small tin bucket swung from his hand. To Ailsa's surprise, he arrived not in the least out of breath, or noticeably warm.

"I wasn't long, was I?" said he. "This stuff isn't quite the right shade, but I can fix it with a little yellow and blue. Hello!" he broke off suddenly to stare at his sign. "My word! What's struck Gwendoline? Is she going to jump out of the picture at me? Oh, I say, did you do that?"

He turned to stare at Ailsa, unbounded admiration in his clear blue eyes.

"No," she answered; "Mac did it."

"Who's Mac?"

"My dog. Do you like it?"

"If I weren't a poor sign painter, I'd saw it out and take it home. She's a peacherino — pulcherrima — pippin-esque! My dear young lady, you have plainly missed your vocation. You ought to be a sign painter."

"And are you sure that is not to damn me with faint praise?"

"Considering that bovine background of mine and the foreshortening of Gwendoline's waistline, perhaps it is. Especially as I am at the head of the profession."

"And do you find it a profitable one?"

"More so than many other branches of art—such as trying to paint Salon pictures in the Latin Quarter."

"And have you done that?"

"Yes. Unsuccessfully. At this branch, however, I am successful. I am just now paid by piecework, and manage to earn about fifty dollars a week."

"And how do you get about with all this gear?"

"I've got a trap. Every morning I crank up old Dobbin, and start out, working along my assigned route, and usually putting up at some farmhouse for the night. Last night I stopped on the edge of the town. The farmer brought me down here this morning at five, and took Dobbin back. He's to have the use of him to-day, and that will square the board bill."

"And have you always work enough?"

"More than I can attend to. Artistic sign painting is not an overcrowded profession, because, you see, the chaps that ought to be in it are busy turning the art galleries into chambers of horror. Used to do it myself. Don't know how many people I've given astigmatism. I could do with an assistant."

"And how much would you be paying an assistant?"

"Oh, fifty dollars a month, or thereabouts, according to ability."

Ailsa leaned forward, with sparkling eyes.

"Would you be willing to engage me as your assistant?" she asked eagerly.

CHAPTER VII.

The sign painter stared at her, then laughed. Ailsa liked his laugh. It was boyish and merry, and showed a double row of very nice white teeth.

"Is that a joke?" he asked.

"Not at all," she protested. "I should much rather be a sign painter than a nursery governess. One is more free and independent, and lives out in the open air. Besides, I like to paint—and really I'm not half bad at it."

"You can paint better than I," he answered, and stared at her thoughtfully. "It's rather hard work; but, after all, you have the rainy days to rest up."

"On rainy days one could make sketches and block them out to enlarge to scale," said Ailsa.

"That's so. After all, why not, if you'd really like to tackle it? But would you be let?"

"There is absolutely nobody to prevent me," she answered. "You see, I'm a foreigner, and have not been long in this country. I've got to earn my living—and I won't go back to the last place I left." She looked at him doubtfully for an instant, then said, with a sudden burst of confidence: "I ran away."

"I thought you'd run away from some place," he observed; but did not add that he had casually inquired at the store if there was any young ladies' seminary or similar institution in the neighborhood.

"Yes," said Ailsa; "I ran away last evening. I got lost in the woods, and spent the night in a deserted fishing boat."

"Well, upon my word! Weren't you frightened to death?"

"I was too tired—and then I had Mac."

"Mac looks efficient. Is he yours?"

"Yes. He gave himself to me." She laughed.

"Well," said the sign painter, "since you are your own mistress, and have got to earn your living, I don't see why you shouldn't paint signs if you want to. It's a good proposition for me, as you seem to understand the business; and, besides, I can use you for a model. I'll give you fifty dollars a month, and all expenses paid, with the prospect of a raise to seventy-five if I can make the company boost me, say, twenty-five per cent when they see the sort of work they're getting. We can travel together as brother and sister. My name is Joshua Reynolds Jones, and yours is Rosa Bonheur Jones. How does that strike you?"

"It should be a famous combination, I am sure."

"Well, then, Rosa, I'll pitch in and finish this pastoral. You can't turn to until I get you a paint blouse like mine and some gloves. By the way, how about your kit?"

"I shall write to the place I left, and have my things sent to the house of an acquaintance; then I will write her, and ask her to send me on what I will be needing."

"Right! I'll finish up then, and we'll walk back to the town. You can go to the post office and write your letters, and I'll get the rig and call for you there. We've got a lot of work along this railway line."

And, without more ado, he sloshed about a quart of green paint into a bucket, added yellow and blue until he had obtained the required tint, and set blithely to work to paint several square yards of lush grass and clover.

Ailsa watched him for a while; then, disregarding his caution, she slipped off her light jacket, and, picking up a brush, proceeded to work in such of the detail as she could reach. He glanced down with disapproval at the softly rounded forearm, bare to the dimpled elbow, and the spotless, open-work blouse.

"Hold on, Rosa," said he; "if you insist on painting, slip on this blouse of mine. I can work in my shirt sleeves. Besides, somebody might be looking for you."

"Perhaps you are right, Joshua."

"Josh," he corrected. "That is more sisterly, and a popular name in the rural districts."

"Very well, Josh." Her eyes sparkled, and the dimple appeared at the corner of her mouth. He helped her into the garment, which enveloped her to the ankles, and the work was cheerfully resumed.

"I'll buy another stepladder, and get a piece of plank to rig out between the two," said Josh. "Then we can make the paint fly. How are you on interiors?"

"I am none so bad."

"That's good! I want to make the subjects all different, with the lettering the same. That holds the eye, besides giving the traveling public an artistic treat—like turning the pages of an illustrated magazine. At the top I paint in big shadow letters: 'ALFALFA DAIRY PRODUCTS,' and at the bot-

tom, in running script: '*The Epic of the Cream.*'"

"Number one, grass, trees, river, lovely milkmaid caressing cow; number two, milking scene, with galaxy of charming damsels extracting milk from mild-eyed kine, and Priscilla in foreground sterilizing paddies; number three, nursery scene—fat pink-and-white infant on lap of beautiful young mother, who is feeding him 'Alfalfa Dairy Product' with spoon, papa looking proudly on; number four, plump and happy children clamoring to pretty nursey for A. D. P.; number five, football training table, with stalwart heroes of gridiron holding glasses to seductive waitress, who pours out gallons of creamy A. D. P., thereby winning the game for Yale; number five, automobile party stopping in front of plant of A. D. P.—fascinating heiress at wheel smilingly accepting growler of milk from blushing dairymaid, while ex-tanks in tonneau lap up buttermilk; number six, old Willy Rockerbilt being fed clabber by ravishing trained nurse; number seven, Old Guard gumming ration of curds and whey served out by tantalizing granddaughter of buxom figure and sunny hair. Catch the idea? The Seven Ages in the Epic of the Cream."

He glanced back over his shoulder to flash his brilliant smile at Ailsa, who had sunk back on the grass in a convulsion of laughter.

"Now you see where you come in," he remarked. "Same pretty girl in foreground. The sales of traffic literature will go to pot when we get these beautiful and artistic object lessons lined up along the track at intervals of a mile or so, and the railroad will have all sorts of damages to pay for silly commuters' heads rapped off as they rubber out the windows. As I said before, the secret of successful advertising is a pretty girl."

"Then you'd better be getting one," said Ailsa.

"Did you say you came from a Scotch fishing port? Well, we won't argue about that. Pretty or not, my ar-r-rt will so interpret you."

"Why do you think I come from a Scotch fishing port?"

"You appear to have angling propensities. Also, you have let slip two or three nautical expressions, and you speak with a Hieland accent which you have praiseworthily done your best to eliminate. However, I should not harbor it against you, as among my many other misfortunes I am of Scotch descent myself. I do hope, however, that you don't happen to hail from a dreary community called Dornoch?"

"And why so?" demanded Ailsa beligerently. "What do you know of Dornoch?"

"I stopped there a few days while on a painting tour in the north of Scotland. That was before I had arrived at my present well-established position in art. I was doing a marine, when a frost-bitten old fool came out of his cottage, and looked over my shoulder. 'How about it?' I asked, expecting the customary praise. 'Mon,' says he, 'if e'er a vessel was to hit yon cloud, she'd go to glory wi' all hands and the cook.' His name, as I learned from a whelp in sea boots, was Graeme."

Ailsa smothered a gasp. The world seemed to her at that moment very small.

"No doubt he was right," said she tartly.

"Nae doot. It was the uncomfortable feeling that he might be that aroused my resentment. However, he did not know to what dizzy heights I was destined. The top of this ladder, for instance. I fell off it the other day, and landed in my paint bucket. That is a good thing to remember. Always place your ammunition at a little distance from your base. Here comes a train. Now, watch 'em stare. The girl will certainly hit 'em in the eye on the asphyxiation coach."

A maternal train of city employees rushed past, with a flourish of hands from the open windows of the smoking car to the pretty girl in the paint blouse who turned to look at them. Joshua removed his hat with a bow of acknowledgment.

"Genius is finally being recognized,"

said he. "Do you think that the caudal appendage of that lord of the herd in the middle distance is long enough?"

"His tail is too long, if that is what you mean," said Ailsa.

"Oh, no. He is a bull, not a bulldog. However, you are more *au courant* of such matters than I. Don't you want to paint in the cow getting up while I smoke a pipe? Speaking of the bull reminds me that I have not yet had my morning's heart poison. Besides, I have forgotten how Sukie yonder looked when she got up, and don't like to disturb her again."

Nothing loath, Ailsa took a couple of brushes, and mounted the ladder. She had made quite a study of sheep and cattle, and with a few deft strokes drew in the rising bovine, doing it remarkably well.

"I see that you have me beaten from here to the model," said Joshua pleasantly. "I see where I am destined to shine with reflected glory. Joking apart, I am almost tempted to think that you are wasted in this profession. However, if we are industrious, you may be able to save enough from your summer's work to take a small studio and try to do some magazine illustrating during the winter. That line of work is scarcely on the same elevated plane as this, but they tell me it pays better. I might even do some sketches myself of the well-dressed gentlemen who appear in the advertising supplement."

In this cheerful and light-hearted manner, the morning passed. But Ailsa quickly discovered that her newly found employer was not an idler. He worked rapidly, and to such good purpose that by eleven the sign was completed; whereupon, Joshua affixed his modest signature, "J. R. Jones," and proceeded to pack up his utensils. Shouldering his light stepladder, he slung his brushes over his back, took his paint bucket in one hand, and the remaining tins in the other, and, having filled his pipe, announced that they were ready to go. Ailsa begged to carry some of the paint tins, but he shook his head.

"No, Rosa," said he; "I am not the man to make a pack animal of my only sister. We will not often do this. Usually I leave Dobbin to eat the paper off these cheap lithograph signs while I work, but to-day my host was in such sore need of his services that I denied myself the pleasure of his society. Also, it pays the board bill."

They strolled blithely up the road, and on the outskirts of the town Joshua paused.

"Here," said he, reaching in his pocket, and taking out a roll of bills; "it is customary in this profession to pay your assistant half a month's wages in advance." And he peeled off two tens and a five. "Never mind about the receipt."

Ailsa took the bank notes with a flush. "You are very kind," she said, looking at the ground.

"Merely business. Of course, since you are my sister"—he faintly emphasized the last word—"I shall expect you to count upon my absolutely brotherly care and protection on any occasion that may arise." His clear blue eyes looked frankly and a bit fixedly into her gray ones. "Wait for me in the post office. I will not be long, and then we will get some lunch, and start."

Ailsa hesitated. "Hadn't you better take Mac with you?" she asked. "You see, the—the people at the place I ran away from might be on the lookout for me, and he is rather conspicuous."

Joshua nodded. "You are right," said he. "It would be a terrible family disgrace to have my only sister arrested for stealing a dog. On the whole, perhaps you had better not go to the post office. Wait for me here behind those bushes. I will bring some note paper, and you can write your letters with my fountain pen, and we will post them in the next village we pass." He looked at her thoughtfully. "Maybe I can get you a sunbonnet from the farmer's wife. Do you mind another cold meal? It would be safer."

"Not in the least," she answered. "I love cold things."

"Then get under cover, and wait.

Keep Mac with you on your leash. I won't be long."

With a slight nod, he turned on his heel, and strode off in the direction of the farm.

CHAPTER VIII.

Old Jeremiah sat by his open window, and stared down upon the vacant building lot directly opposite. The house had been completely demolished, and the débris carted away. Also, the sidewalk had been cleared, and a green-painted board fence thrown across from one to the other of the flanking residences. Jeremiah had been informed by his private secretary that, owing to some litigation, it was possible that the property might remain in that condition for some months.

There was a discreet rap at the door, and the voice of the footman announced:

"Mr. David Wishart to see you, sir."

"Ye will show him up," growled Jeremiah.

The old man did not so much as turn his head when David entered.

"Well," he growled, "and have ye any news?"

David dropped, unbidden, upon the window seat. His face was pale, yet moist, for the day was very sultry.

"Nothing in regard to her whereabouts, Uncle Jeremiah. That wretched woman in Brooklyn tells me that Ailsa writes to her every week, and says that she is getting on nicely, but she refuses absolutely to tell me from what address. Her invariable reply is that Ailsa has strictly forbidden her doing so. That's all I can get out of her."

"Then why do ye come whimpering here to me? Ye have lost her through your own lunkheadedness, have ye not? Go find her again, and leave me to get well in peace."

"But how am I to find her, Uncle Jeremiah?" David's harsh voice was half a whine.

"How the de'il do I know? And what d'ye want o' me? Am I to go traipsin' over the country with my snout to the ground?"

"I've thought of a scheme," said David slowly, "and I want to ask you what you think of it. That accursed Airedale of ours went with her, and, as she was fond of the brute, the chances are that he is with her yet. How do you think it would do if I were to put a 'Lost or Stolen' advertisement in the leading dailies, offering, say, two hundred and fifty dollars for information that would lead to his return?"

"That is a fine idea—if ye have nothin' better to do than to scour the country tryin' to identify the beast."

"I could engage a man to do that."

"Then go ahead and do it. But there is one thing I would be askin' you. What if you locate the dog and the girl at the same time? What right have ye to interfere with her? Ye would have her up, maybe, for stealin' the dog? A handsome showin' ye would make in court."

David sprang to his feet. "Don't sneer at me, Uncle Jeremiah!" said he hoarsely. "You don't understand. I'm not thinking of your millions now." The blood rushed into his face, and he turned almost fiercely on the invalid. "Man, I love the girl!" he cried.

Jeremiah looked at him for the first time during the interview.

"Sit down," said he quietly. "Now, that is more like it."

David resumed his seat, drew out his handkerchief, and mopped his face. Jeremiah observed him curiously.

"So ye have some real feelin's, after all?" said he. "And ye really love her?"

"Yes—so help me God!" muttered David.

"Well, then," said Jeremiah dryly, "I will help ye—to get over it. The lassie is not for you. If ye leave the girl alone, I will see that y're not left empty-handed when I go. If, on the other hand, ye try to marry her, I will leave ye nothin'."

David's jaw dropped, and he stared in amazement at his uncle.

"But why—in Heaven's name?" he exclaimed.

"David, man—and you the teacher of a Bible class!" Jeremiah raised his

withered hands in mock horror. "Well, then, I will tell ye. 'Tis plain to me y're not the man for Ailsa. Ye would crush her with your dour, disagreeable ways. Stick to the money-makin', David, and give the lasses the cold shoulder. Ye will be a rich man some day. Ye have the makin's of it. But, man, ye have not the makin's of a good husband."

David did not answer. He stared at his uncle in anger and disbelief. Jeremiah moved slightly in his chair to face him.

"Mind ye now," said he, "I mean what I say. Leave the girl alone, and ye will find that I will not deal hardly with ye. That much I owe ye for the trouble that has come to ye through me, and I always pay my debts. As for the girl, ye need not worry. A body that has the gumption she has shown can tak' good care of herself. Ye cannot have everythin', David. Y're a good business man, 'tis said, but ye have lots to learn of the love-makin'. I see it all quite plain. Ye chilled her to the bone, and turned her against ye, then tried to tempt her with gold and all it might do for her kinsfolk. Am I not right?"

David moved uneasily.

"And then when she would not yield, ye tried to carry things with a high hand, and she fled away. I might have known it. Now ye will let her go, and content yourself with the money-makin', will ye not?"

David rose suddenly from his chair. "No, by God!" said he harshly. "You can keep your millions, Uncle Jeremiah. I want Ailsa Graeme, and I'll have her, by heavens, if I have to go to the end of the world to find her!"

And, turning on his heel, he strode from the room.

CHAPTER IX.

"So, you see, sister, dear," said the sign painter, "it has come out just as I predicted. True art must always find its proper level of appreciation, whether in the exposition, upon the operatic stage, or spread upon a sign. Here is a

letter from the Town & Country Sign Painting Company, inclosing a check for three hundred and fifteen dollars for our last month's work. Read it aloud that I may bask anew in the sunshine of achievement."

Ailsa picked up the typewritten sheet, and read as follows:

"Mr. Joshua R. Jones,

"DEAR SIR: We take pleasure in forwarding you herewith our check for three hundred and fifteen dollars in payment for your services during the month of July. We are also pleased to assure you of our entire satisfaction with the ingenious manner in which you have executed the order of the Alfalfa Dairy Products Company, Limited, and inclose herewith a letter of commendation from the president of the company, Mr. John T. Ruggles.

"Owing to the public interest and approval aroused by your ingenious series, 'The Epic of the Cream,' we have this day signed a contract with the A. D. P. Company for forty-two signs of like character, fourteen of which are required along the line of the New Haven Railroad between Greenwich and New York, fourteen on the Pennsylvania Railroad between New York and Newark, New Jersey, and fourteen along the New York Central between Yonkers and Poughkeepsie.

"Before undertaking this contract, however, we have a hurry order for you to execute, in New York City itself, five eighty-ten signs ordered by the Auld Peet Rick Scotch Whisky Importers.

"As we understand that you are now completing the work for the A. D. P. Company, we would request that you return immediately afterward to consult with us in regard to the whisky ad contract.

"We take pleasure in forwarding to you by same post a copy of 'Art in Advertising,' in which you will find a complimentary criticism and some reproductions of your 'Epic of the Cream.' Yours truly,

"THE TOWN & COUNTRY SIGN PAINTING COMPANY, R. S. PLANCK."

Ailsa clapped her hands. "That is splendid!" she cried, with a warm look at Joshua.

"It's all your doings, sister, dear. Now listen to this:

"We have duly read and considered your letter of the eighteenth ultimo, in which you tell us that you have secured the services of an able assistant, and ask for an increase of fifty per cent on the rates now paid you. Inasmuch as the work is entirely satisfactory and being accomplished in much less time than is usual with contracts of this character, we are willing to approve your

demand, and will make payments accordingly for as long a time as the work continues of the present character.

"So, you see, sister," said Joshua, "you get raised to seventy-five dollars a month. Now that we've got the swing of working together on this 'Epic' series, we can splash 'em off in half the time. I'm thinking of putting you on a regular twenty-five-per-cent basis; I believe you'd earn a good deal over your seventy-five dollars a month that way, and I wouldn't feel so conscience-stricken about working you to death."

"You are very good to me," said Ailsa.

"Not a bit of it, any more than the company is good to me. It's merely good business on my part, just as it is on theirs. 'The laborer is worthy of his hire.' Well, our work here is finished, so it's back to town for ours." He sighed.

"This farmer seems a good, honest sort of Dutchman, and he says that he'll keep Dobbin for his use as long as I like. As this is Sunday, we might as well stop here to-night, and go into town to-morrow morning. The farmer can take our stuff in early, when he goes to the station with the milk, and we can walk to the railroad and catch a train at about nine. It's only about a mile to the depot. I'll have him buy our tickets and check the stuff, so that we won't have to bother."

"Have you anything in mind for the whisky signs?" Ailsa asked.

"Been thinking about that. I did some things around Dornoch that weren't so bad. There was one of an old inn at the Bonar Bridge across the Moray Firth. I could use that if I can manage to get hold of it. Just the thing. A knot of bushy-faced, kilted old guzzlers in front of the inn, with a beauteous Hieland lassie serving out 'a drap whusky' from a bottle of 'auld peet rick,' conspicuously labeled. In the distance, hills covered with the bonny purple heather, and a glimpse of the Moray Firth. What?"

"It would be perfect!" said Ailsa, with a little pang of homesickness, for

she knew the spot well. "Where is your canvas?"

"I sold it to an old coot for five dollars once when I was hard up, before I had arrived at my present state of public recognition. He bought it to leave in his will to somebody he didn't like. As I have seen nothing in the papers of his demise, it's probably still stowed away in the attic. No doubt I can bribe his butler to lend it to me. But there's one thing I balk dead at—you can't paint with me in town."

"And why not, pray?" Ailsa demanded crisply.

"You are too—spectacular. It would draw a crowd, and then some fresh guy would say something, and I'd poke him, and we'd both get pinched."

"And who would dare pinch me?" Ailsa demanded hotly, having taken the statement in its literal sense.

"The large Hibernian in blue and brass buttons who preserves the public peace of the quarter where we might be engaged. No, I will give you a short vacation while I am doing the whisky signs. Besides, you would not care to be an exploiter of strong drink, would you?"

"Indeed, it is all in the day's work, and I am going to help, and you will see that nobody dares to molest me. Pinch me!" The high color flamed in her charming face. "I should like to see them try!"

Joshua looked at her, and laughed, but there was a slightly breathless tone to his mirth. Their eyes met across the well-garnished breakfast table, and for some reason Ailsa's dark lashes fluttered down, and the red blood glowed through the clear, tanned skin of the sign painter's lean face. He rose suddenly.

"Come!" said he almost curtly. "It's a lovely morning. What do you say to a stroll?"

Ailsa agreed, and went to get her hat and parasol, while Joshua walked out to the barn to say good morning to Dobbin and to liberate the squealing Mac. As their work had finished not far from the shores of the Sound, Joshua suggested that they have their lunch put

up by the farmer's wife, and spend the day picnicking on the beach. To this Ailsa blithely agreed, and half an hour later found them sauntering leisurely down a sandy little road that wound through a grove of stunted pines and came out upon a broad, shingly stretch of beach on the edge of a bay, at the head of which was a snug port.

They seated themselves under the shade of a tree, and for some minutes neither spoke. Somehow, of late the sign painter's constant ebullition of high spirits appeared to have deserted him, while Ailsa, too, seemed to have fallen into the habit of long, musing silences. These came particularly when at times in the course of their work he insisted that she rest for a while. Then she would seat herself on the grass, and stroke Mac's wiry coat, while her eyes never left the square, athletic figure of Joshua as he painted away with his characteristic swift, sweeping strokes.

He was a much faster worker than the girl, though lacking in her truer sense of color and draftsmanship, and it was always Ailsa who pulled the picture together in the end, giving it the magic touch of life and motion that raised their joint production so far above others of the same character, and made of what might otherwise have been a blot upon the fair face of nature something that pleasantly attracted and held the eye of the casual observer.

For some time neither spoke. A faint draft of air from the north scattered the face of the water with sparkling jewels, and brought to them the briny odor of sun-dried kelp, for the tide was far out. Ailsa was sitting with her hands clasped about her knees, her gray eyes half screened by their long, dark lashes, and a faint smile on her full red lips as she watched Mac bounding joyously out into the wavelets that lapped the beach. Joshua, a little behind and to the left of her, watched Ailsa.

Both were in their holiday attire—Joshua in blue serge and negligee shirt, his coat thrown aside, and the sleeves rolled back from his muscular forearms; and Ailsa in a short skirt of light

tweede, with a short-sleeved blouse and a little straw hat. Her clear complexion was ruddy with health, and in the bright morning sunlight her fine-spun, heavy hair shone like burnished copper.

Joshua studied the soft contour of her cheek, the delicate profile of the straight, pretty little nose, with its piquant suggestion of an upward tilt, the round but girlish bosom, and the soft bare forearms, and sighed like a porpoise that is glad to get to the surface. Ailsa, being far from deaf, heard the sigh, and turned, with a teasing smile on her fresh, pretty mouth.

"There you go again!" said she. "I told you not to eat so many waffles." She looked at him critically, but with a misty softness in her eyes. "And if you don't look out you will be getting fat. There are two black, suspicious-looking lines on the wrong side of your belt buckle."

"There are also some dark, suspicious shadows in my soul," said Joshua. "I am sad at the thought of going back to the hot and evil city."

"You cannot be expecting to live always in Arcady."

"That is why I make noises like a grampus coming up to blow. The waffles are the least of my troubles."

"And what is the greatest?" she asked, then turned to throw a stone for Mac.

"The future," he answered; "or, rather, the lack of it. There really isn't much ahead for a sign painter. At least, there isn't for this one. Now, with you it is different. Your talent is protesting against strewing pearls of art before commuting swine, even if you are not. So far it has done you no harm, because you have learned things about covering big surfaces. Some day you will be doing frescoes for lobster palaces and statehouses. Each sign that you have worked on has marked an upward step in your ability, while for some time I have been pivoting uncertainly on the tight rope of my perihelion."

She turned and threw him a baffling

little smile. Her eyes were very tender.

"So it is the jealousy that is bothering you?"

"No. Selfishness. I realize that it is only a question of time before I lose you."

"Indeed? And what if I prefer to continue painting signs?"

"You have too good sense for that."

"And how about yourself?" she asked gently. "Are you going to be content always to paint signs?" The look that she gave him was intense.

"Fraid not. When I lose you I shall probably have a whack at something else. You might not think it, but I am a very versatile man. I can drive a bus, mix drinks, run an elevator, chop tickets, shove a lawn mower—oh, there's scarcely any limit to my accomplishments. Maybe I can get on the police force."

She turned and fastened her gray eyes severely upon him.

"You are not to be bitter," said she, "or you may lose your assistant sooner than you think. You have never been that way until just lately, and if you keep on you will make me think that I am having a bad effect upon you, and that will never do at all. Do you know?"—she regarded him speculatively through half-closed eyes—"sometimes I find myself wondering who and what you really are. It's plain enough that you are a gentleman born."

There came a sudden yelp from Mac. Nosing a large crab with quick backward snatches of his head, the dog had grown a little overconfident, with the result that one of the strong pincers had fastened suddenly upon his lip.

"*Ki-yi-yi!*" shrieked Mac; and Ailsa scrambled to her feet. But Joshua—and one can scarcely blame him—had snatched up a pebble and shied it at the source of interruption. His aim was unintentionally good, for the stone, which was about the size of a pigeon's egg, struck the unfortunate animal full in the ribs, thus adding to his trouble.

"*Ow-wow-wow!*" sang Mac, and flung his head in air. The crab was filleted high, landed in the water, and

scuttled off, while Mac hurried, sneezing, to his adopted mistress, and flopped down, panting, at her feet.

Ailsa turned an angry face to Joshua.

"How can you be so cruel?" she cried.

"I didn't mean to hit him; and, anyway, you must admit it proved an excellent counterirritant."

She turned her back squarely on him, and began to unlace her little shoes.

"What are you doing?" asked Joshua meekly.

"I am going in wading. You had better go and look for a spring."

And Joshua went.

CHAPTER X.

To Ailsa, wading blissfully in the cool, clear water, with her skirt pinned just above her pink, dimpled knees, and a wary eye on the lookout for crabs, there came from the top of the bank a sound like escaping steam, followed by a humble and contrite voice that asked:

"May I come back? I found the spring."

"Then you may come—if you don't mind my bare legs. I'm dying for a drink."

Joshua slid down in an avalanche of sand, holding the luncheon pail skillfully aloft. Ailsa, tiptoeing gingerly up the pebbly beach, took it from his hands, removed the tin cup, and drank the sweet spring water with ecstasy, then handed the pail and cup to Joshua with a smile.

"Am I forgiven?" he asked anxiously.

"Of course you are. I know that you would no more hurt Mac than I would. I was angry because I was thinking of—something else."

"Somebody else?"

"Yes. There was a man—a beast—at the place I ran away from. He beat Mac unmercifully one day, and for nothing at all. That was the reason I stole him. Just now, when he yelped, it made me think of that."

She seated herself in the shade, drawing her skirt down to the trim,

round ankles, and leaving the small, pink feet to dry in the kiss of the warm breeze. Joshua, his eyes irresistibly drawn to them, greatly envied the breeze.

He dropped down beside her on the short, brine-burned sedge.

"Will you promise never to be angry with me again?" he asked.

"I'll try. There is really no excuse for being angry with so nice a brother. But, you see, Josh, I've got a horrid temper."

Again the grampus. Perhaps it was the "brother," a relationship now far less attractive than at the beginning of their comradeship. Or it may have been Ailsa's reference to her "horrid temper." Joshua stole a glance at her as she sat placidly waiting for her feet to dry sufficiently to brush away the sand.

He looked at her with a sort of reverence and a great wonder. "Was there ever her like?" he asked himself; and answered "No" in the same breath. Always sweet, always cheerful, he had seen her face conditions that would have tried the courage and tact of any woman he had ever known. There was about her that indefinable quality peculiar to some feminine natures that seems to disarm evil through the utter unconsciousness that such a quality exists. Neither, for that matter, did the usual conventions say much to her, perhaps because conventions are, after all, intended for those who cannot trust themselves without, and of such clay Ailsa certainly was not.

Joshua wondered what could be the extent of her sentiment of affection toward himself. He knew that she liked and admired him so; in fact, she had frankly told him so. But at times it had seemed to him that, catching her unawares, he had read something deeper than this. The chances are that another man, more self-assured, would have decided long since that the girl had grown really to care for him, and that not as a sister; but Joshua's was a nature of extreme self-depreciation.

It was his honest belief that he was, at best, a very uninspiring individual,

and a good deal of a fool. He had carelessly frittered away a considerable fortune, and that in ways that did not particularly amuse him. He had entertained extravagantly people in whom he had no especial interest; gone in for motor racing in France, and horse-racing in England; spent a small fortune on a shooting expedition in Central Africa, though himself but a lukewarm sportsman when it came to killing things.

Getting bored with painting in Scotland, he had gone to Dundee, chartered one of the many auxiliary steam whalers, and made a voyage to the arctic after bear and walrus; and, returning from this, he had spent a gay winter in Paris, Switzerland, and the Riviera. Monte Carlo, whither he went with the idea of trying to recoup his shattered fortune, had put the finishing financial touches on him; when, realizing that his fortune was a negative quantity—or would be when his debts were paid—he had returned to America with the cheerfully confident idea of going to work, like lots of the other chaps he knew, and making another pile, just as they did.

The story of his disillusionment in this regard it is unnecessary to tell. Suffice it to say that he quickly found, rather to his surprise, that it was considerably harder to make money than to spend it. The best that can be said of him is that, once he fully realized his actual commercial value, he accepted the situation cheerfully, and, following the sneering suggestion of old Jeremiah, promptly hunted up a job as a painter of signs.

At the first, the work had appealed to his whimsical sense of humor, and he got as much satisfaction out of the absurd fact that he—Archie Loveday—had become a sign painter as he did from the fact that he was thus enabled to earn as much as any other skilled artisan.

Just how long this happy-go-lucky state of content might have lasted it would be impossible to say. The chances are that it would not have been for any great while, and that once the

novelty of the situation had worn off he would have joined the ranks of gentlemen adventurers of the cleaner class.

Then Ailsa had come to him, as if sent to show him what he had lost. At first he had accepted the girl in his characteristic spirit of happy-go-lucky whimsicality, finding much in the situation that was piquant. But as he began to discover that in Ailsa fate had sent him a feminine personality of such strength and sweetness as he had never thought existed, Joshua began to get thoughtful.

Next came the gradually growing conviction that the girl had the makings of a really great painter, for Joshua's critical ability was sound, though his work as a producer was not. This knowledge gave him further pause; and then, as if in bitter irony, it was destined that he should fall desperately and hopelessly in love with his charming and full-natured assistant.

It was here that the sighing state began. Joshua, like many other fatuous young men of his class, had been the careless recipient of many feminine favors, all of which had left him comparatively cold, and with the growing conviction that he was himself immune from the poison of invisible darts. But now it had come, and he asked himself miserably what he was to do about it.

Pride, honor, and a sense of fairness told him that even if he were man enough to win the girl's heart, he had absolutely no right to make the attempt. His natural modesty failed to tell him that he had won it almost from the very first, and that nothing could more firmly clinch what he had gained than his unconscious attitude of unselfish comradeship and strong, protective force.

And so he sighed and suffered, while Ailsa, who read him like a book, smiled softly to herself, and waited for the inevitable. It must also be admitted that both flourished on the régime.

So now he sat and sighed, covertly devouring her with his eyes from the top of her gorgeous hair to the tips of her pink little toes, and cursed inwardly the fate that had made him a fool and

her a goddess who was destined one day to mount high in the achievement of art. He reflected that she was not for him, a sign painter, but that at any rate he might be the force to launch her upon a career. It was this thought which prompted him presently to say:

"I've been thinking it over, Rosa, and I've decided to stake you."

"To what?" she asked, looking around in surprise.

"To set you up in business."

"But I am in business—and a very congenial business, at that."

"Nonsense! The time for joking has passed. Let's be serious for a bit. I've seen what you can do, and, believe it or not, I know. You've got to start painting. Real painting."

His voice held a note almost of austerity that was quite new to her. Ailsa was not sure that she liked it.

"But how am I to start?" she asked. "It takes money, and a lot of time to build up a clientele. I'd rather paint signs with you, and be free to send back what I can spare to my people."

"But suppose that in three or four years' time, instead of sending back, say, fifty dollars a month, you could, send back two hundred and fifty? And you could do it, I am sure. You are a natural-born portrait painter. All you need is the start, and that I think I can get for you. I know a lot of good people, and most of the big dealers."

"But it takes money to rent a studio and buy material."

"I'll look after that end of it. That's what I meant when I said that I had decided to stake you."

She turned to him a flushed, radiant face. The soft mist in her gray eyes was now almost rain.

"And do you think that I would be letting you do that?" she cried softly.

"Why not? You can keep track of what I advance you, and pay me back some day when you have arrived. No doubt I'll need it."

"But what if I should not succeed?"

"No danger of that. I might even manage to get you some big orders for theaters and hotels and the like. You see, Rosa, before your dear brother"—

he slightly accentuated the word—"was a sign painter, he used to fly pretty high. I've got lots of friends left, if I haven't much money. Fact is, I wouldn't have to paint signs if I could bring myself to take something for nothing. But you're not nothing, and I'll take what I can get for you."

Ailsa was silent for a minute. She leaned over, and began to flick the dried grains of sand from her round ankles and rosy feet.

"But what will you be doing while I am getting my start?" she asked presently, in a very low voice.

"Painting signs. They won't be anything like what we've done together, of course, but I'm getting the swing of it now, and can always command the pay I was getting when you came to me. You see, sister, dear, it costs me next to nothing to live. I could easily let you have a hundred a month—probably a hundred and fifty. And I've got about five or six hundred saved from the wreck to start you in with."

Ailsa began slowly to pull on one stocking, with no apparent regard for the proprieties so far as regarded a limb that might have aroused the envy of Latona, a goddess famed for the perfection of those members. Ailsa was not thinking of her legs at that particular moment. We cannot answer for Joshua.

"And then," said the girl, talking apparently to her unwrinkled hose, "when I shall be arrived, as you say, and beginning to sell my pictures?"

"Then?" He looked a little puzzled. "Why, then you'll grow famous, I suppose, and the joke will simmer out of the name I christened you."

"And how about you?" she asked softly.

"About me? Oh, I'll have the satisfaction of knowing that I helped to develop a celebrity."

"I don't mean that. What will you do?"

Joshua shrugged. "Quit painting signs. You can pay me back, and I'll go to Alaska, or out to the South Sea Islands, or blow in my wad and join the Foreign Legion. I always thought

I'd like to be a *Chasseur d'Afrique*. Devilish hot and dirty and heroic."

"And do you really mean," said Ailsa, trying her best to steady her voice, "that you have enough faith in my ability, and—and—affection for—me to slave away for the next three or four years to start me as a painter?" She snatched up the other stocking, and drew it on with a jerk that threatened to make it entirely, instead of partially, openwork.

"My faith in you as an artist is only equaled by my affection for you—as a sister," said Joshua evenly.

Ailsa seemed struggling for her breath as well as for her shoe. She secured both, and turned a rather pale face to Joshua, who was staring out across the placid waters of the Sound.

"And when would you wish me to begin?" she asked, with a tremor in her voice.

"As soon as we get back to New York. We'll look around for a studio to-morrow."

"But who would look after me all this time?"

"You might get some other girl or woman to go in with you. And then I'll look you up from time to time, and see that you're all right, and beat the head off any loose joker that may have got fresh. My work won't take me far from town, and I'll always be within call at an hour's notice."

"But—but—" Ailsa turned away her head. The mist was rapidly precipitating into rain. "I don't want you to go to Alaska, or the South Sea Islands, or the horrid Foreign Legion." She choked a little.

"Well, but don't you see," he answered lightly, "if I go to Alaska, I might dig up some large chunks of gold. Then I'd come back, and—and maybe forget that I was your brother." His breath seemed to strangle him, and he stopped abruptly.

Ailsa turned to him suddenly, flinging out both her arms. Her face was pale, except for her lips, which were carmine and trembling. The tears were pouring down her cheeks.

"I want you to forget it now!" she

cried passionately. "I'm not your sister. I don't want to be your sister! I want you—you—just only you!"

And the next instant she was in his arms, her own clinging about his neck, and her tear-stained face crushed against his.

One can scarcely blame Joshua for behaving as he did for the next few seconds. Indeed, had he acted otherwise his history would be scarcely worth describing. There are limits to nobility. But for all of that, he held himself in hand most admirably, and when his famishing thirst for the hot lips crushed to his had been in some slight measure assuaged, he loosed her gently, and drew slightly away, his face pale, and his big chest heaving.

"There, there, sweetheart!" said he gently. "That sort of thing is strictly outside the contract."

"But I love you!" sobbed Ailsa. "Don't you love me—just the least, wee bit?"

This appeal was too much for Joshua. He gathered her in his arms again, and the sacred rites were repeated with a frenzy by no means characteristic of coldness. Then, holding her closely to him, he spoke manfully what was in his mind, while Ailsa listened, sobbing the harder for the fact that she knew in her heart there was no appeal.

"Listen to me, my own darling," he said. "I love you with every drop of blood in my body, and every fiber in my heart. But because I love you so much I am not going to let you throw yourself away on a wretched sign painter. We shall do what I have proposed, and then some day, if I can manage to do something worthy of you, I shall come to claim you for my own darling wife. So now, if you love me as you say, don't make it any harder for me than it is. Come, dear, dry your pretty eyes, and we'll talk about the studio."

"But I don't want the studio! I want to stay with you and paint signs, and b-be happy. Why won't you marry me now? What do I care if you're a sign p-painter? I'm one myself." She clung

to him desperately. "Think how happy we could be—just one long honeymoon, Josh—and, oh, mercy!—I don't even know your right name, n-nor you mine! Isn't it p-p-pathetic?"

CHAPTER XI.

Old Jeremiah stared drearily through his open window. He had sufficiently gained in strength and in the consciousness of a possible motility to begin to chafe at the confinement that obliged him to sit day after day and stare at the drab walls of the shuttered houses opposite.

Jeremiah was bored and unhappy. He was bored because a devitalizing heat was on the city, which appeared to have suspended all animation as it lay grilling in the August sun; and, although the old man did not object to the high temperature, he found his outlook depressingly dull. He thought to himself that he would be glad when they began to rebuild on the vacant plot opposite, as then he would have a spectacle of life and motion. Besides, the jaundiced tint of the green fence was an eyesore to one who looked daily in the mirror at a somewhat similar hue.

Jeremiah was also unhappy. His conscience, which for many years had been the mere relict of an atrophied organ, like the vermiform appendix, seemed lately to be on the point of functioning again. Strange qualms were beginning to germinate in the kernel of this hard old nut, who had been for many years the direct and voluntary cause of many an act of present-day piracy. Jeremiah was beginning to think that perhaps he had not dealt well with his nephew, Archie, and the granddaughter of an old and loyal friend.

After all, reflected Jeremiah, cogitating along the lines of thought of Epictetus, what a man does not want, he has—or as good as has—for the simple reason that he does not want it. Archie did not want his twenty millions; ergo, Archie was a multimillionaire, and as such deserving of respect. Archie did not want a wife; therefore he had one, and a very convenient one,

who would cause him neither trouble nor expense. Archie might not be such a fool, after all, and he was certainly good company, and Jeremiah missed his breezy, nerry society. Besides, if you called him a fool, he took it in good part. Other men grew either sulky or apologetic. Archie was neither, which went again to prove that he might not be such a fool, after all, on the Socra-tean theory this time.

With two such backers as Epictetus and Socrates, Jeremiah was disposed to reconsider his appraisal of Archie—the more so as he had recently been seeing a good deal of David, who came in almost daily to complain about (1) the enormous number of Airedale terriers in the United States, (2) the surpassing ignorance of canine knowledge exhibited by the masses, which claimed for an Airedale anything from a Mexican hairless dog to a brindled Siberian mousehound. And all of them answered to the name of Mac.

Jeremiah was turning these things in his mind, for lack of better, when, happening to glance down into that shimmering hot-air conduit known as the street, he saw approaching on the other side a stalwart man in painter's blouse, carrying a light stepladder on his shoulder and a large assortment of pots and brushes suspended from different parts of his anatomy. Under his arm was what appeared to be a canvas on its frame.

The man approached briskly, and with apparent indifference to the heat. Opposite the fence of bilious hue he stopped, set down his paint pots, and assembled his ladder.

"Now, what have we here?" said Jeremiah to himself. "Has the gowk the impudence to be painting one of his dirty signs before our very noses? I will soon put a stop to that."

He reached for his bell, but before actually touching it he stopped. After all, why interfere? The fence could be no more objectionable than it already was, while the process of painting might afford him some diversion. Jeremiah settled himself in his chair, and awaited developments.

The painter went about his job in a quick, methodical manner that rather appealed to Jeremiah. He measured the fence, and marked the limits of his field, which, by means of a crayon and a straightedge, he divided into many little squares. Then, consulting his canvas, he began to draw in his design. In an incredibly short time he had worked up an outlined sketch of the front of what appeared to be an inn, some figures, a background of hills, and what looked like a river in the left middle distance.

The work proceeded rapidly, while Jeremiah watched with a fascinated interest. Passers-by also paused to look on, but the painter was working in the full blaze of the afternoon sun, and they did not linger long.

"Yon paint slinger knows his business," said Jeremiah to himself. "Now, where the de'il have I seen a place like that?"

As the work proceeded, this query bothered him with growing force. There was something about the position of the house, the contour of the distant hills, the location of the sheet of water, that jarred into activity cells long dormant in Jeremiah's brain.

The composition was strangely familiar, yet impressed him as something long forgotten, almost of some other world. Try as he would, it was impossible for him to place it, and when finally it grew late, and the sign painter began to gather up his things, Jeremiah was half tempted to send his footman across the street to ask the man where the place was.

That evening found Jeremiah in such a cheerful frame of mind as to arouse much speculation downstairs. The footman was of the opinion that the old man had learned of the collapse of some financial enemy, or possibly of the death of a friend or relative; whereas the chef took unto himself the glory, maintaining that the change was due to the doctor's having eased up on Jeremiah's rigorous diet, thus giving that best of doctors, the cook, an opportunity to effect a cure. But the butler, unable longer to preserve his pledge of

secrecy, finally demonstrated that both explanations were in error.

"It's Mr. Archie 'as done it," said he oracularly, "a-pyntin' of that there sign acrost the street."

"A-paintin' a sign—Mr. Archie!" cried the footman.

"There you 'ave it. Mr. Archie 'as took to sign pyntin'. It's not for me to s'y whether 'e done it to spite the marster or maybe to soften 'is 'eart at seein' 'is hown nephew brought to such strytes, but any'ow Mr. Archie is a-pyntin' of that bloomin' big sign acrost the street. And, wot's more, 'e's doin' a good job of it, I must s'y."

As a matter of fact, they were all wrong. Jeremiah had not recognized his nephew. Archie had been careful not to look up toward the window after the first swift glance, which told him that Jeremiah was there. Also, he had let his mustache grow, and what with his cap and blouse, would scarcely have been recognizable to Jeremiah even at close range. The old man was cheered because, for the first time in many days, he had passed the afternoon without being bored.

He had enjoyed watching the painter at his work, as any one may understand who has passed a long and monotonous convalescence unassisted by any active interest. To such an unfortunate, the most trivial of incidents becomes a boon, which is perhaps one reason why the public-ward patients of a hospital preserve a better mental tone than the occupants of private rooms. To Jeremiah there was also the added interest of the mystery, which he felt sure the following day would solve.

It was, therefore, with a really pathetic anticipation that he was wheeled to the window the following morning. The sign painter had apparently been at work for some hours; but, as Jeremiah immediately discovered, he had confined himself to the figures in the foreground, letting the rest of his picture wait.

Yet herein lay the clew, for it needed but one glance at the whiskered, kilted old fellows before the inn to bring back the whole scene to the lonely invalid,

peering from his window like some old sea eagle in his aerie on the cliffs of the North Sea. Jeremiah slapped his knee with his withered old hand.

"'Tis Bonar!" he rasped, so sharply that the footman jumped. "The auld public house by the Bonar Bridge! Aweel, aweel!"

"Beg pardon, sir?" said the footman.

"Ye will get me my field glasses," said Jeremiah gruffly.

The glasses were brought, and Jeremiah raised them to his eyes with hands that shook a little.

"The auld Goodman wi' the sandy whiskers is the livin' image o' Wully McRae," muttered Jeremiah. "He was a Bonar man. The ither one I dinna ken. But the lass—now, where have I seen yon lass?"

He laid down his glasses, and, reaching for his handkerchief, furtively wiped his eyes, which seemed for the moment to have grown strangely dim.

"'Tis the old age," growled Jeremiah, and picked up the glasses again. "The lass— Hoots! Is it not Ailsa Graeme?"

His jaw dropped, and the glasses all but fell from his palsied hand. But he did not need them now, for there could no longer be any doubt. It was Ailsa's fresh, smiling face, and Ailsa's tall, supple figure that the sign painter had depicted on his board. Jeremiah gasped, and one hand went to his skinny throat. Was he the victim of hallucination?

"Now, who can the body be," he whispered to himself, "who kens Ailsa and kens auld Wully, and he with the hole still in his plaid as true as life? I mind how he was ever sayin': 'A drap whusky for the hole in my plaid.' But it canna be Wully; he'd be in the kirkyaird long syne. Aweel, aweel yon—"

He focused his glass upon the painter, but the man kept his back persistently turned. Having worked in the figures to his satisfaction, he turned to the distant hills, over which there began to diffuse itself, under the swift strokes of his brush, a soft, purple glow.

"The heather!" cried Jeremiah. "The bonny, bonny heather!"

Again there came into his sunken eyes such a dimness as might be produced in those of one facing a heavy Scotch mist. Something long frozen at the core of the old man seemed to soften and melt. His throat contracted—and yet he was conscious of a warm, soft glow such as he had not felt for many years. He dabbed his eyes again, and fixed his gaze upon the picture, hungrily watching every stroke of the swift brush.

Others were watching also—a group of passers-by whose gestures made it evident that the sign was receiving all the consideration it deserved by its very real merit. Presently the big policeman of the beat came sauntering along, and joined the knot of admirers. He spoke to the artist, who turned his chin on his shoulder, and stopped painting for a moment to reply.

Jeremiah could not hear what was being said, but it was evident from the little sideways ducking motions of the big officer's head that his remarks were of an appreciative quality. The artist smiled, and resumed his work, while Patrolman Kelly hooked his thumbs in his belt, and stood with his feet apart and his head cocked on one side, the picture of approving artistic criticism.

"Whoever the man may be, he has the paintin'," said Jeremiah to himself. "Now, if Archie could only have done the like, instead of his shameful naked wenches! I would like to have a look at yon lad. Belike he is no so long from Dornoch or Inverness."

He raised his glasses, and at that moment the painter turned, and, as if under the influence of some magnetic attraction, raised his face squarely up toward the window, squarely into the field of Jeremiah's excellent lenses; it was almost as if he had thrust his head up over the window sill. From Jeremiah's throat there came a strangling, gurgling sound.

"Archie!" he cackled shrilly. The glasses fell from his hands, fortunately to land on the cushion at his feet. Jeremiah leaned back, shaken and giddy.

"Archie!" he muttered. "'Tis the lad himsel'!"

For several minutes he sat pale and still, fumbling at his senile lips with his long, thin fingers. Then slowly the tinge of color returned to his shrunken cheeks. He touched his bell.

"Ye will tell the chef to get luncheon for two," said he; "and ye will cross the street and say to Mr. Loveday, who is paintin' yon sign, that I will be expectin' him here at twelve-thirty. Ye will say to him that he is to come just as he is."

"Very good, sir," said the footman, and left the room.

Jeremiah watched him as he crossed the street and delivered the message in Archie's ear. He saw Archie nod, then glance up to the window with his old familiar smile. Jeremiah barely resisted an answering nod, then sat with mumbling lips and hands that trembled on the arms of his chair.

But this emotion soon passed, and Jeremiah found himself watching the progress of the picture with a renewed interest. It is probable that his value as an art critic was about on a par with that of Patrolman Kelly, but in any case the old man was convinced that here before him was a piece of work as pleasing to his eye as any he had ever seen in any gallery or exhibition.

There was, indeed, about Archie's painting, with all its faults, a certain quality of warmth and brightness that may have been the reflection of his own cheerful nature. He painted things as he usually saw them—through rose-tinted spectacles—and the result was invariably pleasing.

The two old Highland shepherds joking the pretty barmaid over their glasses may not have been strictly true to life, but they were at least as one would like to see them. The girl, well in the foreground, was really charming, with her heavy hair of burnished copper, her bright, rosy face, her bare, round forearms, and trim ankles; and the first thought that would occur to the average passer-by would invariably be: "I'd like to strike that inn."

At twenty minutes past twelve the painter folded up his ladder, gathered together his apparatus, and crossed the street, entering the house by the basement door. The small but appreciative audience dispersed, and Jeremiah settled himself in his chair and waited. Several minutes passed; then there came a brisk footstep outside the door, and a cheery voice cried blithely:

"Good morning, Uncle Jerry! Mighty good of you to ask up a poor devil of a sign painter." He stepped to the side of the old man, and regarded him with an expression of surprise and pleasure. "My word, but you're looking brisk! You see, I was right; these fool doctors don't know it all. Never patronize 'em myself."

Jeremiah gave him a bleak look from under his shaggy eyebrows.

"Sit down," said he. "Have you got the paint off ye?"

"Yes—and borrowed a coat from Martin."

"So this is your way of spitin' your relations—paintin' signs on the streets?"

"Not a bit of it. That's my way of earning my living. Only way that was open, in fact. Besides, I don't expect to work in town. This is just a small contract. I paint out along the railroad tracks, and my name is Joshua Reynolds Jones."

"Will ye have a drop o' whusky?"

"No, thanks, Uncle Jerry. I promote the sale of whiskey in a different way now that I'm a workingman."

"And how may that be?"

Archie jerked his head toward the sign across the street.

"That's a whisky ad. Got to plaster it with letters as soon as the picture's finished."

"What!" cried Jeremiah, leaning forward. "'Ye are goin' to spoil it with letterin'?' Not that there is much to spoil," he added, remembering himself.

"Seems a pity, doesn't it? But, you see, Uncle Jerry, there's art for art's sake, and art for the artist's sake. This is art for whisky's sake. Your old brand—'auld peet rick.'"

Jeremiah grunted. "And how long

have ye been workin' at the sign paintin'?" he asked.

"Ever since our last sad parting."

"And how much will ye be earnin' now?"

"Two hundred a month, or thereabouts."

"Hoots! They overpay ye. And can ye live on that?"

"I've saved two-thirds of it."

Jeremiah eyed him keenly. It occurred to the old man that here was a very different man from the flippant idler whom he had driven from his house. Archie's skin was clear and fine beneath its tan. He had grown heavier, and his eyes were keen and bright, and showed beneath them none of the former lines of dissipation. The crisp mustache gave him a manlier, less adolescent, look. Also, his face appeared to have acquired a certain sternness, and his smile was less mocking and more genuine, flashing out suddenly, to disappear as quickly.

"Then ye have never regretted the refusin' of my offer?"

"No, sir. What's become of the young lady?"

"I hear she is gettin' on. Teachin' or the like. Here is your food. I suppose ye do not get much canvasback and terrapin these days?"

"No; I usually put up at farmhouses. Have to worry along on fresh eggs and buttermilk and roast chicken and trout and hot biscuits and honey and waffles, homemade pastry, and——"

"Hold your tongue! And do they cook them well?"

"You never tasted the like. I stopped not long ago with a Scotch family. The guidwife gave me scones and stewed eels with a lump of pork——"

"I tell ye to stop it! And how were the eels?"

"Melt in your mouth. And the scones were like the ones you get at Dornoch—crisp and dry and——"

"That will do for ye! Y'are talkin' to an invalid."

"You'd soon be tucking them away, Uncle Jerry, if only you'd chuck your doctors, and get out in the good air. Why don't you take a run across to

the old country? You'll be able to travel in a few days."

"I am thinkin' of it. I am minded to leave my fortune there."

"Well, no doubt they need it more than we do."

"Who are ye workin' for?"

"The Town & Country Sign Painting Company, of this city."

"H'm! And so y'are goin' to plaster yon sign with letterin'? H'm!" Jeremiah grew pensive.

Archie applied himself to the excellent luncheon with an appetite that came not of alcoholic stimulation, but of honest toil. Jeremiah watched him from under his beetling brows, occasionally glancing through the window at the nearly finished sign. Occasionally he grunted. Archie's remarks were random and infrequent. Having finished his meal, he glanced at his watch, then looked rather doubtfully at Jeremiah.

"I say, Uncle Jerry," said he, "you don't happen to want your portrait painted, do you?"

"By you? Thank ye kindly. I have a large and expensive collection of Lovedays."

"Oh, I wouldn't tackle it. My specialty is signs. But I've got a friend that's a wonder. She's the coming portraitiste, and her prices are reasonable."

"A woman, is it?"

"A young Scotch girl. You ought to have your portrait done, really. Hang it in some board room, or leave it to some——"

"Ye have worked that once. Have done with ye."

Archie chuckled into his coffee cup. Had he been looking at Jeremiah, he might have observed that wry, twisted expression that came rarely when the old man's startled features were forced protestingly into a grin.

"Well, Uncle Jerry, I must be getting back on the job." He turned to the old man with a smile. "Many thanks for the hospitality. Saves me a quarter and a walk to Third Avenue. What time did you say for me to tell my artist friend to call?"

And then he received the surprise of his life, for Jeremiah answered quietly: "At two o'clock to-morrow. Good day to ye."

CHAPTER XII.

Archie was painting away industriously before the usual admiring group when the voice that for the last few days he had so sadly missed remarked at his elbow:

"That is excellent, Josh—much better than the others."

He looked down smilingly. "Hello, Rosa!" he said. "I'll be with you in about twenty wags of the brush. Better wait in the shade across the street."

"I don't mind the sun," she answered.

"How about my color on this one?"

"Your heather is a shade too purple. You've got to consider the distance, you know. Work a little gray into it; that will give it the proper value, and suggest the atmosphere."

"You're right, as always." He changed his brush, and proceeded to follow her suggestion. Ailsa drew back a little to observe the effect. Archie had strictly forbidden her working with him in the city, but did not object to her passing by late in the day for a word of criticism. He had recently been stopping work at about four, and spending the rest of the day with Ailsa in the search for a small studio apartment. The girl herself, on arriving in town, had gone immediately to the house of her relative, where she found herself very thoroughly bored.

Ailsa had seen at once, from the address given her by Archie, that by an odd coincidence the locality was opposite Jeremiah Wishart's house. She had little fear of being recognized, however, even should the old man happen to be at the window, as it was not necessary for her to look in that direction. Even so, it did not seem probable that a man of Jeremiah's age and infirmity would remember her.

Withdrawing to the curb, she waited for Archie to lay in the few remaining touches. He had not yet undertaken

the lettering, wishing to wait until the background should dry in. As he was toning down the overbrilliant heather, a messenger boy pushed his way up to the ladder.

"Hey, mister," said he, "are you J. R. Jones, from the sign-paintin' concern?"

"Yes," Archie answered, looking over his shoulder. "What about it?"

"Then this is fer youse," said the youngster, and handed him a note. Archie tore it open, and read as follows:

Mr. J. R. Jones.

DEAR SIR: Owing to certain objections on the part of a prominent property owner opposite the sign upon which you are now engaged, you may omit the usual large lettering. If the lettering is already painted, kindly erase it, painting in background as before. Yours truly,

TOWN & COUNTRY SIGN PAINTING COMPANY.

Archie whistled. "Didn't take the old man long to fix that," he said to himself, and turned to Ailsa. "Read this, Rosa," said he, and handed her the note.

Ailsa took it from his hand, and stepped a little clear of the group about the ladder to see what it contained. She had just finished it when there came at her elbow what sounded like the gasp of a person in pain. Ailsa glanced up quickly, and looked straight into the dark, saturnine face of David Wishart.

Archie, dabbing away at the last few touches on the blue water of the firth, had not observed the approach of his cousin, nor had David discovered the identity of the sign painter. With a pale face, and lips that trembled slightly, he was staring at Ailsa, who had shrunk slightly away from him, her cheeks colorless.

"Ailsa!" said David, in a low, tense voice. "At last——"

The girl seemed unable to speak. She glanced quickly at Archie, then drew still farther away from David, who took a step toward her.

"Where have you been?" he asked, in a low voice, for some of the idlers were looking at them curiously. "Come—walk along with me."

Ailsa did not move. David's strong

hand dropped on her elbow. She wrenched her arm away, and at the same moment Archie, feeling some tension in the atmosphere, glanced sharply around. He was just in time to see David's act, and his jaw hardened. In an instant he was down off the ladder, and, pushing the idlers roughly aside, confronted David, his eyes glittering like blue steel.

"What are you doing, you bounder?" he growled. "Leave that girl alone!"

David glanced up at him, and his jaw fell. To the onlookers, he presented the perfect picture of the "masher" caught in the act.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "Now, what's the meaning——"

"Pull your freight!" snapped Archie. "Get out of here—and quick!"

To David the situation was plain enough. Here was Ailsa, whom he had sought high and low, and who had apparently paused in passing to observe the maneuvers of his crazy fool of a cousin, who for some ridiculous reason had seen fit to masquerade as a sign painter. And, not satisfied with this, here he was attempting to play the rôle of champion to beauty in distress, thereby putting him—David—in the wrong. The blood flamed up into his face.

"Mind your own business, you fool!" he snarled. "Get back there and paint your beastly sign." He turned to Ailsa. "Come!" said he, and reached for her arm again.

The next thing of which David was conscious was of something soft and wet and sludgy shoved violently into his face. He gasped, choked, spluttered, pawing wildly at the air. His vision was blinded, and as his mouth opened in a roar of rage some vile, bristly thing was crammed into it, and a viscid fluid that smelled of turpentine was squeezed down his throat, and set him to coughing violently.

Shouts, yells, and shrieks of laughter were ringing in his ears when *swat!* and something struck him full on the side of the head, and deadened even the sense of hearing. *Swat!* and here it was again on the other side. Then a

strong grip fell upon his shoulder, and a gruff voice with an Hibernian accent was saying, in tones not unmixed with mirth:

"Come, sor; ye had best get out av this before y'are painted blue entirely. And I've it be a lesson to ye not to get gay with the sither av a sign painter!"

"But, damn it! B-r-r-r!" This last an indistinguishable splutter of paint and such objurgatives as the teacher of a Bible class should certainly never use. "That man is my cousin——"

"Then 'tis lucky fer you he is not a brother, or ye might be wearin' the paint pot in place av a hat. Come, sor! Move on, youse!" This last with a wave of his club at the howling crowd.

Frothing with paint and rage, David freed himself with a furious wrench of the arm, strode across the street, mounted the steps of Jeremiah's house, and, the door being opened by the butler, who had rushed out at the sound of the uproar, disappeared within. Archie looked at Ailsa, and as he did so there came from high overhead an eerie burst of sound.

He turned his eyes upward. There in the open window was old Jeremiah, rocking back and forth, and emitting such noises as might be expected of a person whose risible apparatus had been out of commission for many years.

"Good Lord!" said Archie, with a startled look. "He's laughing!"

"Who is laughing?"

"Uncle Jerry—eh, that old codger up there in the window."

He stopped short, for Ailsa's eyes were staring at him wildly.

"What did you call him?" she asked sharply. "Uncle Jerry?" She took a step nearer, and, glancing back at Patrolman Kelly, who was occupied in dispersing the crowd, asked in a low, tense voice:

"Do you mean to tell me that you are Mr. Wishart's nephew?"

Archie stared at her, and his grin faded.

"Lor' o' love! Do you know him?"

"Are you 'Archie'?"

Archie's mouth opened and shut like

that of a goldfish. He seemed struggling for air. His face turned crimson.

"And are you—the—the girl?"

"Yes," Ailsa answered slowly, "I am the girl. The girl that you wouldn't marry for four million pounds. And to think that I should have been flinging myself at your head! Oh, I shall die of shame!"

She turned on her heel, and started to walk away, but had taken only three steps when old Jeremiah's footman, who had rushed out of the house and across the street, stepped up to her side.

"Mr. Wishart's compliments, miss, and he would like to speak to you."

"Which Mr. Wishart?" asked Archie.

"Your uncle, sir. And he would like to see you, too, Mr. Archie."

"Oh, come, Rosa!" Archie pleaded.

"Do, please, for my sake."

"And why for your sake, sir?" she retorted angrily.

"Oh, because—hang it all, how was I to know? And you needn't be afraid of David——"

"I'm not afraid of David. I'm not afraid of any of you. I hate you all!"

"Oh, come, Rosa—please!"

Ailsa hesitated for an instant, then turned, and, with a set face, walked across the street and up the steps. Her temper had the upper hand, and for an instant she asked nothing better than to tell the three Wisharts, individually and collectively, precisely what she thought of them. With Archie at her heels, she entered the house, and followed the footman up the stairs.

"Miss Graeme and Mr. Archie, sir," said the footman, and hurriedly withdrew, coughing violently.

Ailsa, her face aflame, and her eyes flashing, entered the room. Archie, still in his paint blouse, followed, discreetly closing the door behind him. Old Jeremiah, huddled in his chair, was mopping his eyes and shaking convulsively.

"Oh, Archie, man," he gasped, "ye have like to been the death o' me! And you, Ailsa Graeme!" His speech failed him.

Ailsa drew herself up stiffly.

"Mr. Wishart," she began, "perhaps you may be thinking it a very funny thing——"

"Oh, hush, hush, dearie!" cackled the old man. "Ye would not be grudgin' me the first laugh I've had these fifty years. Oh, oh, when David came rampin' across the street in great spangs, the face of him blue as a turkey gobbler wi' the paint——"

Such a convulsion seized him that Ailsa's anger began to melt in alarm. She stepped quickly to Jeremiah's side.

"Stop it!" said she imperiously. "Do you want to have a fit?"

Jeremiah looked up at her with streaming eyes.

"There, dearie—'tis the hysterics, no less. There—let be—funny, d'ye say? It was—— There, let me get my breath again——"

For a moment or two he struggled with his feelings, then lay back, weak and quiet, in his chair.

"A man should not let himself go so long without a laugh," said he. "The humor gets dammed up like, and is apt to kill ye when it gets loose. And how did it happen that you two forgathered, and where? Sit ye down, and tell me all about it."

Ailsa hesitated, then, at a gesture from Archie, seated herself stiffly on the edge of a chair. Archie, realizing that large things were at stake, proceeded in his quiet, pleasant voice to put the old man in thorough possession of all the facts connected with his and Ailsa's meeting, and their subsequent work together. Old Jeremiah listened with a flush on his wasted cheeks and a glow in his deep-set eyes.

"'Tis wonderful," he muttered, when Archie had finished his recital. "'Tis more than wonderful. 'Tis providential. And so"—he glanced from one to the other—"ye have both come to a different opeenion?"

"I have," said Archie promptly, and with an anxious look at Ailsa.

"And so have I," she answered coldly. "I was willing to marry your nephew if he pleased me. But now, after the way I have been treated, I am

wanting only to see no more of any of the Wisharts."

"But, Rosa—Ailsa!" cried Archie imploringly, when there came a discreet rap at the door.

"What is it?" cried Jeremiah harshly.

"Mr. David Wishart wishes to know if he can see Mr. Wishart alone, sir," said the voice of the footman.

Jeremiah glanced at the two young people. "Go through into my study beyond," said he, "and wait until y'are sent for. I have not yet finished what I am wishin' to say."

Ailsa hesitated for an instant, then rose, and passed through the bedroom to the study. Archie followed her, closing both doors behind them. Ailsa walked to the window, and stood looking out, her back turned to Archie.

"R—Ailsa," said he beseechingly, "it wasn't my fault. How was I to know that you were the girl——"

Ailsa turned sharply, and her clear, lovely profile was cut like a cameo against the bright light without.

"Nonsense, Josh—or Archie, or whatever your right name is," she answered, in a hard little voice. "I'm not blaming you for that. I'm blaming myself for being such a fond, silly fool as to fling myself at your head as I have. And you knowing all the time that you were the favorite nephew of a great millionaire. No wonder you did not want to marry me, knowing as you did that you were pretty sure to inherit a great fortune one of these days. And no wonder you were content to be painting signs for a bit!"

"But, Rosa—oh, 'good Lord!—I didn't expect to inherit a cent. The old gentleman fired me out neck and heels. I thought I was done for, cooked, annihilated. But after I met you I used to lie awake nights, singing hymns of praise that I had been man enough to refuse his offer—because, you see, dear, there was always the chance of getting you some day. It was only when I came to the conclusion that you were so much too good for me that I began to get the hump."

"Rosa, you don't really, deep down in your heart, believe that I ever had

it in the back of my head to make up with Uncle Jerry, and let you go for what I thought was the other girl? You can't. Haven't you got to know me any better? And couldn't you feel me loving you every second?"

Ailsa turned back to the window. Archie stepped to her side, and took her hand in his. She made a little effort to draw it away. His grasp tightened, and she let it lie.

"All I asked, sweetheart," said Archie, "was to love you and work for you and to help you to get on. Of course, I couldn't help but hope that some day something might happen to make it possible for me to claim you for my own darling wife. But I never, never counted for an instant on Uncle Jerry. I thought that he hated me for a conceited fool. And so he did when he chucked me out."

Ailsa was silent for a moment; then she said, in a low voice:

"I suppose you wonder why David stopped to speak to me?"

"I did, and I do yet. I never thought that he was that kind."

"Then you must know that he is not," said Ailsa. "I was almost as good as engaged to him."

"Engaged to him—to David——" Archie cried, and released her hand.

She turned and looked him full in the face. "Yes," she answered. "When you refused to have anything to do with me, your uncle did not tell me anything about it, but sent David in your place. I thought that it was David he had in mind for me from the first. He was very kind and polite, and made it very easy for me, and his mother asked me out to Bonny Brae. I was there for about a fortnight—and you may be sure that David let no grass grow under his feet—when it was a question of four million pounds—Stop! Where are you going?" For Archie had swung sharply on his heel.

"I'm going in there and smash his ugly, sneering——"

"Josh, you're not!" She flew to his side, and seized the hand that he had laid on the knob of the door.

"Yes, I am!"

"But, Josh, no—think of your uncle!"

"Serve him right, the old crocodile! I'll—I'll spit in his face!"

"But, Josh, just stop to think——"

"I've done thinking enough. He'll fire us both out, and we'll go straight down to the city hall, and get a license, and be married as quick as they can tie the knot. Let go my hand, Rosa—Ailsa——"

"Oh, but, Josh, it isn't necessary."

"What!" He gave her a startled look. Ailsa turned crimson, then burst into a laugh.

"Shame on you, sir! I mean it isn't necessary to thrash David—and spit in your uncle's face. I did it myself."

"Spit in——"

"No, no, silly! I thrashed David. I cut him across the face with my dog whip. Then Mac bit him, and we ran away. That was the day before I met you."

"Well, upon—my—word! You cut him across the face—oh, Rosa, but I do love you! And don't you care a bit for your sign painter, who——"

"I adore him! I love him nearly to death! Oh, Josh!"

"Ye need not blame an auld man," said a dry voice; and the clinging lips were torn suddenly apart. In the doorway stood old Jeremiah, on his feet,

and on his face the wry, twisted expression that stood for a smile. "I ha'e knockit three times, and, gettin' no response, began to think ye had bolted again. But I see ye were more profectably engaged. Aweel—aweel——"

"Uncle Jerry!" cried Archie. "Walking, as I live!"

"Ou, aye. Yon contortions ha'e straightened the kinks oot o' my auld legs. Hoots! But we ha'e been a pack o' fules—all four of us." He chuckled, then stopped suddenly, and looked alarmed. "I'm thinkin' I maun be in my dotage, gigglin' like a lass in the school. David is gone, puir man! 'Twill tak' some days, I'm thinkin', to soak the paint out o' his seestem; but he is no so sore, though havin' fared so ill at the hands o' both o' ye."

"And you say he's not sore about it, Uncle Jerry?"

The old man's eyes twinkled. "I dinna think so," he answered. "Ye see, I felt I owed him somethin', so I am arrangin' to divide my fortune between him and Ailsa, owin' the lass somethin', too, for havin' saddled her wi' a ne'er-do-weel. So get ye married as fast as ever ye can, as I am wishin' to see a bairnie before I go."

He crossed the room with tottering steps, and laid a gaunt hand on the black head and the bronze one.

"God bless and keep ye both!" said old Jeremiah.



THEY WHO SIT IN JUDGMENT

LET him whose garments bear no mark—no stain

The first stone cast at her who only wears

The shreds of what was once a spotless gown—

That to life's scourging now mute witness bears.

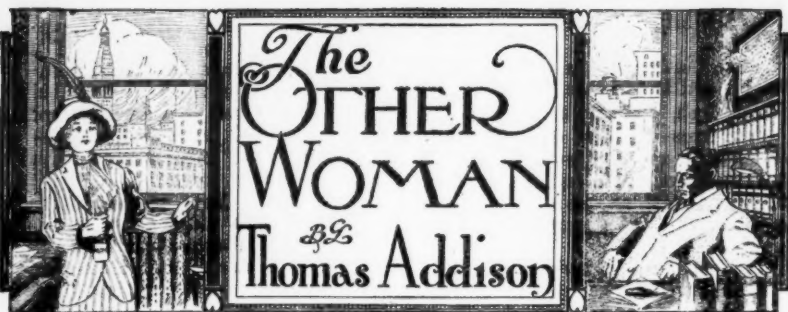
And then let him who stands at peace with God

Dare to bend earthward from his high estate,

And lay the hand of censure on the head

Of her—who sinned—and not condemn her mate!

BETH SLATER WHITSON.



THE outer door of the law offices of Henson, Crowley & Benson swung open, and a young and stately woman entered. Her sable furs threw into brilliant relief a face charmingly featured, though with a touch of haughtiness in its expression.

Mr. Jepett, the senior clerk, rose, and went to meet this person. He had instantly surmised her identity; in fact, he had been on the lookout for her this half hour past. He made his approach with the air of serious solicitude he reserved for specially favored clients.

"Mrs. Beverly Clarke?" he questioned, in tones of a religious hush.

The lady inclined her head.

"Thank you," said Mr. Jepett gratefully. "Will you be good enough, Mrs. Clarke, to come with me? Mr. Benson is expecting you."

Arrived at the door of the junior partner's private office, Mr. Jepett tapped on it lightly, and when a sonorous voice cried out "Come in!" he opened the door, announced the caller, and in almost the same breath removed himself from the scene.

A tall, powerfully built man, who had risen from his desk, was at the threshold in two quick strides.

"Etta!" he exclaimed.

"Dan!"

His great hands swallowed up her slim, gloved one, and he drew her into the room, talking volubly the while—volubly, that is, for Daniel Benson:

"My dear girl, it was just my beastly

luck to miss your wireless yesterday. I was in Pittsburgh. But I've explained all this on the phone—let me look at you. By my hopes of heaven, you are good to see, Mrs. Beverly Clarke!"

"And you, Mr. Daniel Benson!"

"Two years, isn't it, Etta?"

"A little more, but a month or so doesn't matter," she answered, smiling gravely. "I went away in December, and you were married in March. Everything dates from then, I suppose, Dan?"

"My happiness—yes," he replied. His deep voice took on a low and thrilling note, and his rugged features softened.

"I am glad, Dan—so glad," she told him.

For a moment they stood eye to eye, silently taking stock of each other, and Benson's face grew sober. He said abruptly:

"Here, let me relieve you of that coat; then we can talk."

He threw the heavy fur pelisse on a chair in the corner, and motioned her to his own seat at the desk, where her back would be to the window. For himself, he took the client's chair, to the left of the desk, on which the light fell full and strong. He had nothing to conceal from her, and if she were not so minded with regard to him he would take no undue advantage of her.

Woman and child, he had known her twenty years—from when he was a gangling college sophomore and she a fearsome nondescript in bobbed frocks.

There had been a time in those years when he would have died for her, or thought he would; and there was never a time when he would not have fought for her. He was as ready now with brawn or brain to do battle in her name, and it was because she knew this that she had come three thousand miles to see him.

She leaned back in the huge pivot chair, pulling off her gloves, and scrutinizing this old friend of hers.

"Big brother!" She called him this half playfully, and under her breath.

Benson smiled at the almost forgotten appellation; it carried him back a goodly distance, and stirred memories long dormant.

"Little sister!" he responded. And added: "Shall we let down all the bars between us, or would you rather keep one or two up?"

"I want them all down."

"That is well, for now I can say what I please. To begin with, what does all this mystery mean? Your name is not on the passenger list of the *Andalusia*, you are staying at an obscure hotel, and in our painfully brief telephone talk you enjoined me to keep your presence on this side a secret. Etta, what does it mean? I am afraid to guess."

She looked squarely at him, her delicate chin set firmly, her blue eyes cold and resolute.

"You don't have to guess, Dan. It means but one thing—Beverly."

"You have quarreled with him?"

"I am going to divorce him," she said slowly.

A little fleshy knot sprang into sight midway of the habitual furrows between Benson's eyes. It was a peculiarity that characterized him when strongly moved. Etta Clarke recognized it.

"I have got to do it, Dan," she declared. "I trusted him, and he has betrayed me."

Benson was gazing past her out of the window at the heavy snowflakes that were beginning to fall. He might have been trying to count them, so long did he hold the silence. But at length

he spoke musingly, as if he were debating a question with himself:

"Would it be a thing to wonder at if a man but little past his twenties should seek diversion when his wife goes away from home for two long years, and leaves him to his own devices? Would it be a thing so strange?"

The woman flushed resentfully.

"Did I not have my opportunities as well as he? Would you make excuses for me if I had availed myself of them?"

"Your claim would be less, for it was you who went away."

She made a passionate gesture.

"My mother's health required it. She has no one but me. I wrote to him again and again, begging him to come to us, but he would not. Business—business!—he said required his attention here."

"And yours, too," retorted the lawyer; "the business of staying by your husband. He married you, I take it, with the idea of living with you."

"Dan! You are siding against me—with Beverly!"

"I am not," he replied. "I am trying to be just. I am not your hired counsel; you cannot pay me to fight your case. I am your friend, and Beverly's. If you are in the right, I will help you; if you are in the wrong, I won't. You've got to show me, Etta."

"Do you mean," she demanded incredulously, "that you have heard nothing—no rumors, gossip, scandal—that would justify me in this step? Dan, you must answer me truly."

She leaned over the desk toward him, searching his face. He shook his head with slow deliberation.

"No," he returned. "I am not in the way of such things. I don't go out much. I leave the social end to Annette. But she would have told me had she heard anything to Beverly's discredit, and I would have questioned him. I would have had to do it for Annette's sake."

"For your wife's sake?" echoed the other, mystified.

"Yes. Hasn't Beverly mentioned us in his letters to you?"

"Beverly's 'letters,' as you term them, are mere bulletins of nothings," she told him bitterly. "A crop report would be as interesting."

Benson passed this over with attempted lightness.

"Then I'll tell you that he and Annette are fast friends. In fact, he's her right-hand man in her high social enterprises. I do my little stunt when there's no escape for me, but when there is, Beverly—good fellow!—helps me out. You see," he smiled cheerfully, "I have forty years chalked up against me to Annette's twenty-five. I can't go in for all she does, but I'm no stumbling-block."

Etta picked up a curiously carved, snakelike paper cutter of ivory, and examined it absently.

"And so," she presently remarked, "you have heard nothing?"

"Not a syllable. And don't you think Annette would be in a position to know? Don't you think some kind friend would have dropped the poison in her ear. Little sister, what mischief-maker has been writing to you abroad?"

She threw the paper cutter from her as if it had suddenly developed crawling life.

"Oh! Oh!" she cried out. "If some one only had written—if some one had only spoken! But they didn't; it's not the way of Christian peoples. They tortured me. They made no definite charge, mentioned no woman's name—they left me to guess. They dropped a word here, and another there, and gave me furtive glances and pitying smiles that cut and stung like whiplashes in the dark. Dan, I couldn't bear it—I could not. I had to do something!"

Her voice broke, and she dashed angry tears from her eyes. Benson sat regarding her sternly.

"And while you were being consumed with pity for yourself, what of Beverly?" he asked. "Did you think to give him a hearing?"

She received this with a scornful curling of the lip.

"Oh, yes, indeed! I wrote to him,

and got his answer back. It was quite what I expected."

"And what was his answer?"

"A model of conciseness. Just one word—'Lies!'—scrawled across a sheet of club paper."

"Well, wasn't it enough?"

"It was not!" she countered hotly. "It was what any man would say—what you would say if the case were yours. The wife doesn't count; her shame and anguish are as nothing. For there is another woman to protect, you know. Her good name must not suffer. She must be shielded at any cost. Her peace of mind must be preserved. And so it is right and proper to lie for her. It is a duty. It is more—it is chivalrous, honorable, manly!"

She sprang up, and took a quick turn across the room, her hands clenched, her face pale with the passion that was shaking her. She would have launched into speech again, but Benson, with lifted finger, checked her.

"Etta," he said quietly, "it seems to me you are going far on mere presumptive evidence—tag ends of idle gossip. You are making chains of spider webs to hold a man a prisoner to guilt. You must bring me proof, Etta, before I can believe the charge."

She gave a strange little cry of triumph—the wretched triumph a woman feels in knowing she is right, even though the knowledge wreck her happiness.

"Proof!" she exclaimed. "Why, do you imagine, Dan, that I have come to you without it? I placed the case with a detective agency a month ago, and I've come over now on their cabled summons. They have the proof—all but the woman's actual name, and that they are to telephone me here at three o'clock. I gave them your number."

She sat down in the big chair again, and fixed her eyes on her friend's face. The little fleshy knot at the root of his nose stood forth in greater prominence; but he did not return her gaze; he had taken out his watch, and was studying it.

"Twenty minutes," he said, speaking very softly; "twenty minutes between

doubt and certainty. So short a time as that to bring so much of sorrow in its train."

He looked up at Etta questioningly—accusingly, she thought—and she made a movement of impatience.

"You would still defend him?" She was amazed and angered.

"I would give him a chance," he answered mildly. "If I loved him, I would give him that; if I had ever loved him, I would do it—for his own sake, if not for mine."

"Ah, but would he do the same for me if I had wronged him?"

"It is not a question of what he would do; that doesn't enter into it," he returned. "It is what you will do that matters."

She ignored this.

"You know he wouldn't forgive me—a man never does. Would you, Dan, if you were wronged?"

For the moment he made no reply. Once more his eyes sought the falling snow beyond the window, pure and spotless as God's great charity.

"Would you, Dan?" she persisted.

"I think so, little sister," he rejoined; and his voice trembled. "Yes, I know I would—for her sake, and for mine. For what is love without forgiveness? And if we can forgive in little things, why not in great?"

Her mouth squared itself obstinately.

"In all but this one thing I could forgive him; but this—never!"

Benson glanced at her from under his shaggy brows.

"You want revenge; is that it, Etta? You want to punish Beverly?"

"He has shamed and humiliated me beyond endurance," she protested. "He has outraged my love, soiled it, killed it. He must be made to suffer for it."

"Will your humiliation be lessened by dragging your name through the divorce court?" asked the lawyer. "Do you want it linked with this other woman's? Do you want all the sordid notoriety of a public trial—your face in the newspapers, each look, each act, each word of yours recorded? I grant that this will punish Beverly, will make him suffer, if he has one spark of love

and loyalty left for you; but do you wish to punish him to this extent, Etta?"

She drew back, shuddering at the picture he had drawn.

"What is left to me?" she cried. "Only a separation?"

"Why, as to that," said Benson gravely, "it seems to me it is already in effect. You have been away two years, and of your own free act. Has Beverly ever asked you to come home?"

She hesitated, and there was a troubled light in her eyes.

"Yes," she acknowledged. "At first he did, but—I've explained to you about mother."

Benson shook his head.

"That won't hold water, Etta. A wife's first duty is to her husband. Beverly could bring counter suit against you for desertion—and he'd win it."

She gave him a startled look, clasping her hands upon her breast.

"That would be monstrous!" she gasped. "It would be heaping wrong on wrong."

"Yes," said Benson; "his wrong on your wrong. You can't escape it, Etta. I hold no brief for Beverly; I am not seeking to justify him; but the fact remains that you have wronged him, even if in less degree than he has you. You have wronged him."

He got up, and, with his hands behind his back, began pacing to and fro. She watched him in silence, her bosom heaving with tumultuous emotions that could not find their way to words.

"It's the age-old problem that confronts us, Etta, and it is useless to discuss it," went on Benson, after a little. "It cannot be worked out by any known rule; each new presentation must receive individual treatment. What yours is to be is what we must decide."

She said nothing, and the big man continued his pacing up and down, talking with studied purpose:

"Beverly is not a bad man. He is not a profligate. He has drifted with the tide because—let us say because his anchorage had failed him. There was nothing for him to hold fast by. We are dealing with concrete things now,

not with abstract principles; we are dealing with the ever-present lure of sex—the primal passion of the human race.

"Beverly—alone, unrestrained, uninfluenced by sight and sound of the woman he truly loves—falls a victim to this passion. And the other woman—who knows but that she, in similar loneliness, has been driven to him?—a loneliness, it might be, of mind and tastes and desires—the most utterly forsaken loneliness in all the world! Well, is it altogether their fault, this sin they have committed? Is no other one to blame on either side? Is their case hopelessly beyond forgiveness? Is their punishment to be without mercy? Who will dare to say this when Christ Himself has said to such as they, 'Go, and sin no more?'"

Benson paused in his walk, and stood at the window, looking out upon the whitened air. There was stillness in the room, and it endured until, turning, the lawyer saw Beverly Clarke's wife bent forward on the desk, her face buried in her hands.

"Little sister, dear!" he called; and, going to her, he laid his hand on her shoulder.

She did not move. She sat as if turned to stone.

"Little girl, little girl," said the lawyer compassionately, "it is a terrible thing to be wronged by one we love; but it is more terrible to condemn that one beyond forgiveness. Without forgiveness, what hope of the life beyond would any of us have? It is the chance to make amends I ask of you for Beverly—the chance I would ask for you, myself, Annette, for all not totally debased. Beverly will suffer—be assured of that. The law of life is inevitable. We cannot break it, and go scot-free. We must pay the price—and Beverly will pay. But, oh, little sister, it is not for you to plot his punishment; it is for you to plan his redemption. And love will do it—the love of a good woman who would save her husband from his own misdeeds."

And still she made him no reply. Benson sighed; there was nothing more

that he could say. The telephone rang. He picked it up, and as he answered it Etta slowly raised her head.

"It is for you," said Benson. He placed the instrument before her on the desk, and, making no excuse, went out.

For a while the young woman sat inertly. She made no effort to take up the receiver. A numbness of mind and body was on her—a leaden fear of the intelligence that awaited her. She could hear from the transmitter a voice querulously questioning the silence, and at last, in mechanical obedience to its demands, she placed the receiver to her ear, and announced herself.

As she listened to the message that came to her over the stretch of thread-like copper—so frail to bear such heavy news—her body all at once grew rigid. Her eyes dilated until the whites showed wide below the upper lids; and her lips fell apart nervelessly. Horror clutched her heart, and stamped its livid impress on her face. She shook the in-offensive rubber cylinder as if it were a living, hateful thing, and screamed into the mouthpiece violent denials of the damning facts that were being told her—incoherent, delirious negations that brought the relation to an abrupt close; the man at the other end rang off, amazed and disconcerted.

Etta Clarke pushed the telephone away from her in loathing, and, with hands writhing one around the other, rose dazedly to her feet.

"Oh, no—no—no!" she breathed smotheringly. "Annette? Dan's wife?"

She kept repeating the words in little, strangling whispers, casting about her with her eyes like some poor, trapped creature of the woods:

"Annette! Dan's wife! Oh, no—no!"

Then came the blasting thought that she would have to face Dan with this dreadful secret locked in her breast. Terrified into action, she ran to the door, and shot the bolt into place. She must have time to compose herself, to decide on the best course to pursue. She must think!

But this she found she could not

do; or, at least, she could think only of the stupefying fact of Dan's betrayal by the woman he loved. She had never met this woman, but she was seized with an awful longing to do her mortal harm, in some way to crush the soul out of her body. Beverly's guilt had ceased to loom so blackly before her. He had betrayed friend and wife alike, but it was the woman that had caused it all—that "other woman" for whom the injured one could find no pity or excuse.

And Dan! Good, honest, loyal Dan! He must go on living with this creature, loving her, caring for her, cherishing her. He must never know that she and Beverly had so dishonored him. It would break his heart—destroy him utterly. He must never know.

Beverly Clarke's wife was not of the breed that lets loose a flood of tears when overwhelmed. She stood dry-eyed in the center of the room, looking about it with curious intentness. One might have thought she was seeking a means of escape from the four confining walls; but she saw no material thing of which she was conscious. She was seeking with her mind for a set of words she had heard in this room not many minutes since. What were they? Dan had spoken them. Ah, they came to her now—prophetic words, though Dan had little dreamed it:

"It is the chance to make amends I ask of you for Beverly—the chance I would ask for you, for myself, for Annette."

For Annette! He would give her the chance if he knew. Yes, she was sure of that; but, oh, the sorrow of the knowing! And on this there came to her a line she had read somewhere—"Love has no thought of self. It sacrifices all things to bless the thing it loves."

For a moment longer she stood there, motionless. Then she went over to the chair in the corner, and, taking up from it her coat, she put it on.

A knock was given at the door—gentle, premonishing. The knob was not touched; she had needlessly locked herself in. If she did not answer, Dan would go away. Her eyes suffused with tenderness as she crossed to the door and softly turned the bolt.

"I am going, Dan," she told him when he had entered.

He asked no questions; only took her hands and held them tightly in his own. She went on quietly:

"There is a steamer in the morning. I am going back on it, and I shall ask Beverly to go with me. I want to take him away from here—far away. Dan, he shall have his chance."

His face lighted up with pleasure.

"I knew it," he said simply; "I knew you."

She released her hands from his, and, drawing a ring from her finger—a diamond of some value—held it in her palm.

"Dan"—her voice shook a little—"I want you to tell your wife about Beverly. Tell her I asked you to do it because—because I would not have you keep a secret from her. Tell her that, Dan, and give her this ring from me. Place it on her finger yourself, and say to her that when she looks at it I want her to remember that—that my prayer is for your wedded happiness as long as life shall last."

She stopped, for her voice had grown pitifully weak and faltering. Now, with a sudden reaching out of her arms to him, she whispered sobbingly:

"Oh, dear Big Brother Dan! Kiss me before I go—for we may never meet again!"



The LAST CRUISE NEITH BOYCE



IN the last resort it was the fault of the Fat Man. Of course, after the gale that struck us on the way up from Boston, and blew a couple of holes in our jib, we should have put into Green Harbor anyway. But if it hadn't been for the Fat Man, we wouldn't have gone near the hotel, and then we wouldn't have met Edith Wayland.

Jim let the Fat Man come, against my bitter protest. And, of course, it was Jim's boat—though, after cruising three summers in her, and spending a month in painting her and varnishing her spars when Jim was too busy to get down to the yard, I was pretty nearly as fond of her as he was. And she was a beauty, was the *Lorelei*, and dressed out like a lady, thanks to nearly all Jim's spare cash.

She had a way of going through his pockets that no spouse could have bettered. Now it was a new suit of sails that she positively must have, or it was new riding lights, or her cabin must be done over; she could get anything she wanted out of Jim. But I will say for the siren that she amply repaid in pleasure all she cost us in time and money. Oh, I was daft about her as well as Jim. And that was one reason I hated to have the Fat Man along—he doesn't know the mainsheet from the tops'l clewline.

He came on board in yachting clothes, with a suit case and a bunch of

fancy canned stuff. I prayed ardently that we might get some weather for his benefit. And we got it all right. We got twenty-four hours of it.

When the squall struck us, Jim and I were busy with the sheets. We thought the Fat Man could hold the tiller, but he howled he was seasick, and when a wave hit him he let go and tumbled into the bottom of the boat, and we jolly near capsized. We kicked him into the cabin, and there he stayed till we ran into Green Harbor. He was a piteous spectacle when we dragged him out. "You've killed me," he moaned. And we had to row him in to the hotel and put him to bed.

The porch was full of women, in rocking-chairs and all along the rails, and we were sneaking through—we looked pretty tough, in wet clothes, and not having slept all night—when I heard somebody say: "Why, Mr. Wilson, is it you?"

It was a nice, soft voice, and she was a nice-looking girl, with neat-looking hair—kind of crinkly, brown hair—and awfully white teeth, which she showed as she smiled at Jim, and a ship-shape white dress. Seeing Jim was pinched, I loped along and escaped.

He joined me at the pier, and said the girl was a friend of his sister's, and had been at their house, though he hadn't remembered it until she told him so, or even her name, which was Edith Wayland. By way of apology, he had said to her that Prissy always had such

a lot of girls about, one coming and another going. And she had laughed and said that he mustn't stand there talking in wet clothes, but he must come in and see her before we left, and tell her all about dear Prissy. And Jim, being rather rattled, with the whole porchful of females staring at him, had promised—so he said.

Well, it cleared off beautiful and warm, and we dried the sails and our clothes, and cleaned up the boat, and slept some. We attracted quite a lot of attention in the harbor; there wasn't anything around that could touch the *Lorelei* for smartness.

The next morning I got to work at the brasses, while Jim went ashore for supplies. He said he'd stop at the hotel and see how the Fat Man was, and make his call on Miss Wayland, as we expected to pull out the next day. It seems he found the Fat Man sitting on the veranda, the center of an admiring crowd of old maids, to whom he was relating our hairbreadth escape from drowning, and how he had saved our lives by his coolness at a critical moment. He shut up when he saw Jim.

Jim asked him when he was coming on board, and he said that his exertions and being wet through had brought on his rheumatism so that he would be compelled to stay behind for a few days, but we must pick him up on our way back. "Good riddance," said I, knowing that wild sea horses couldn't drag him back to the *Lorelei*, and little thinking that I was in for something much worse than he.

Then Jim had gone and hunted up Miss Wayland, who was on the tennis court, and stayed to play a set with her; and then she walked around with him while he bought the supplies, and came down to the pier with him. I could see them from the boat, and it made me tired, for it was past lunch time, and I was starved.

But finally Jim came aboard with a couple of broilers, and some corn, and so on. I asked him if he'd got he lobster, which I was especially on on, and he said no, the pots wouldn't be drawn till to-morrow. That made me

peevish, also being kept waiting for lunch; and when Jim informed me that he was going to take Miss Wayland sailing that afternoon, it was more than I could stand.

I told him that it was a shame to begin the first day in port, and that if I had known there were to be skirts aboard, I wouldn't have come; that he was too easy to live, anyhow; first it was the Fat Man, and now this girl; that he'd better turn the *Lorelei* into an excursion boat, and ply between the mainland and the islands; and that I would go ashore, and he could have Miss Wayland to himself. He said I could go and be blanked if I wanted to, and proceeded to cook lunch.

Well, after eating a broiler and a dozen ears of corn, and a few other things, I felt better, and we smoked the pipe of peace. I will say for Jim that he's awfully good-tempered. I thought I might as well go along and chaperon them and keep an eye on the girl. Jim said that he hadn't thought of asking her, but she admired the *Lorelei* so much, and showed so much interest in her, and got him to talking about what she could do, and before he knew it the invitation had slipped out. Jim hated taking casual people to sail as much as I did, but his weak point was talking about the *Lorelei*; any one could get round him by praising her, and this girl was clever enough to see it.

Oh, she was clever, was Edith Wayland!

Jim went for her about two o'clock, and we had a nice sail. There was a good bit of a swell after the storm, and a stiff breeze, and the *Lorelei* showed her heels to everything, like the darling she is. Miss Wayland sat up out of the way, and kept quiet—didn't I say she was clever?—and she seemed not to mind getting wet, and her hair blew out and crinkled up round her face with the spray shining on it, and she looked quite pretty.

Every time Jim looked at her, she smiled, but he was too busy sailing the boat to pay much attention to her. But I could see that she turned pale and gulped every time the *Lorelei* heeled

over, and that her knuckles were white from holding on to the rail so tight, and that when Jim wasn't looking at her—she didn't mind *me*—she looked miserable.

She was plucky, though, and when we got back, she had the nerve to say that she had enjoyed it immensely, and Jim believed her. And it seems that she had been making a sketch of the harbor, with the *Lorelei* in it, and she said she would do all she could to it next morning, but she hoped we'd stay over another day. If we did, she could finish her sketch, and we could get our lobster, and then we might come in to the dance next evening at the hotel.

I thought it was my duty to warn Jim, which I did when he got back from rowing her ashore. I told him that she was an artful female; that what she was after wasn't sailing, nor yet sketching, it was him; that she was scared blue by the *Lorelei*'s ways, but that he was so easy any one could take him in. He only laughed, and when I kept it up he pitched me overboard. Of course, I was pretty wet already; still, I felt rather sulky, take it all in all, and I didn't say any more to him.

It was a glorious evening, the sea like a sapphire and the sky all purple and pink with the mountains against it. I often think that if I had insisted on going out that night, I might have saved Jim. But I was weak—I wanted that lobster—and, of course, I didn't realize the danger. It never occurred to me that Jim could actually get caught—and by a girl that *hated sailing*; that was too tragic an idea.

The next morning she was down on the rocky beach, painting away for dear life. There was a rattling breeze, and I wanted to go out, but Jim explained that the *Lorelei* was being immortalized on Miss Wayland's canvas, and that he had promised to let her ride at anchor all that morning. Then he said that he used to think I was good-humored. I said I'd go ashore, and he went along, to see what Miss Wayland was doing.

Her little sketch was really very nice. She spoke of the *Lorelei*'s beautiful

lines, and said she was going to give the sketch to Jim. He was no end pleased at that, and said he'd hang it over the mantel in his room, where he kept the *Lorelei*'s racing trophies, and what a pity it was that Prissy was married, else Miss Wayland would be coming to see them, and could see for herself how nice it would look.

I was looking over her shoulder, and I noticed that her cheek, under a big flapping hat she wore, turned red. Now why in thunder should she blush at that? She went on dabbing little bits of paint on the canvas, and after a minute she said:

"I can finish this almost in another morning, if we don't have fog. I hope you're coming in to the dance to-night?"

I suppose Jim, after that business of the sketch, had to say he would come. At any rate, he said it, and I said I'd be glad to come likewise, firmly intending not to stir off the boat. And then, seeing that Jim had settled down on the sand beside Miss Wayland's camp stool, and that they had a suggestion—oh, a mere hint—of three's a crowd—or, I should say, it was the back of Miss Wayland's blue painting apron and straw hat that gave me the notion—I left them.

I struck into a trail that led me into some woods and over a couple of small mountains, and around by a lake. On the lake was a tea house, where I had lunch. It was a lovely day, and lovely scenery, but my heart was with Jim. I smoked a couple of pipes and moped. I suspected Miss Wayland of the most honorable intentions, and I was jealous and foreboding. I got back, and found he had lunched with her at the hotel. I took him back to the *Lorelei*.

I hadn't meant to go to the dance, but when the music of the "Myosotis Waltz" came floating out over the water, I changed my mind and my clothes, and we pulled ashore. It was a regular hotel dance—about sixty girls and two or three men, beside ourselves and the Fat Man, who nearly danced himself into an apoplexy. No wonder Miss Wayland wanted us to come

We danced with her turn and turn about. She was as light as a feather; and looked right pretty, too, in a thin muslin kind of dress with a scarlet belt. She had the figure of a slim kid of sixteen; but all the same, I would have bet she'd never see thirty again. Jim thought she wasn't over twenty-five, he being twenty-eight, and that was suspicious, too.

The dance was over at eleven-thirty, and as we were saying good night on the veranda, Miss Wayland cried out: "What a glorious moon! What a night for a sail!" Of course, we asked her and a couple more girls to come, and out we went.

And it was wonderful—I don't know that I ever saw a prettier night; just a lady's breeze, too, soft and steady, from the southwest. One of the girls began to sing that thing of Schubert's, "To be Sung on the Water," and the "Serenade." Then Miss Wayland sang some more Schubert, some of the Heine love songs. She hadn't much of a voice, but it was soft, and pretty, and tender, and—Jove, what with the love songs, and the moonlight, and the great sail like a white wing-carrying us along, I came pretty near feeling sentimental myself!

Oh, the siren! If I had realized it, I would have tied Jim to the mast and stuffed his ears with wax, too. The poor *Lorelei*! She had a deadly rival aboard her, and nobody suspected it but me, and I only vaguely suspected. If it had been put up to Jim then, "Will you take this girl, or will you stick to the *Lorelei*?" I believe he wasn't too far gone. But, of course, it never was put up to him that way. He thought he could have them both—she made him think so. Perhaps he even thought I could make a third. Or else he didn't think at all, which is most likely.

We did actually get off next day. The Fat Man came down to the pier and shouted good-by to us, and something about seeing us in a week, which I didn't pay any attention to. We had said farewell—as I supposed—to Miss Wayland on the beach, where she was painting faithfully up to the last mo-

ment; and Jim, being encumbered with me and the lobster—which we got that morning—hadn't stopped long. I felt we were well out of it, and as they both had an unconcerned air, I concluded there was nothing in it, anyway. So, as we slid out of the harbor, I was happy again.

We loafed round among the islands for a couple of days, then ran down to Portsmouth and took in the picturesque old town and sniffed the decaying odor of the past, and surreptitiously acquired some bottles of Scotch; and then we coasted up again.

Mostly we had fine weather, hot sun and cool wind, now and then a woolly fog, and two days of rain and cold. It was a heavenly peaceful time, one of our good old times. If we'd known it was the last, or threatening to be, I think we'd have bolted straight over to Spain. At least I would, and have put Jim in irons if necessary.

Jim could make a corking fish chowder. I was strong on pancakes. We nearly worked our way through the Fat Man's canned goods. I began to be rather glad we had let him come. He had some baked beans that weren't bad, and some spiced peaches in glass. I remember it was the night we ate the last of the peaches. We were lying up in a lonely bay on the western shore of some island. I was stretched on the deck twanging my banjo, and, I believe, singing; and Jim was smoking his pipe. Suddenly he interrupted me with the information that we were going back to Green Harbor for a couple of days, as he was entered in the tennis tournament with Edith Wayland.

After a while he said: "It sounds like you're trying to pull that banjo's hair out. What's the matter?"

I said it was too bad that a fellow couldn't express his feelings some old way, and that if I said what I thought, he would probably pitch me overboard, right after a full meal, too.

"Go on, spit it out," said he.

"You're after that girl," said I.

"I'm after no girl," said he. "What's a girl to a boat like this?"

"Then there's a girl after you," said

I, "and that's a long sight worse. If you were after her, she might give you the slip; but if she's after you, there's no hope. I've always known that the first one that really played for you would get you—you're that soft-hearted you couldn't say no; and this one's clever, oh, she's clever!"

"I may be soft-hearted, but I'm not soft-headed," said he. I only twanged the banjo, soft and mournful. "Besides," said he, "there have been others. You seem to think no girl ever liked me before." I twanged the banjo. "And besides," said he, as a clincher, "you're mistaken if you think that this one's after me. Why, I tried to hold her hand that night in the moonlight, and she wouldn't let me."

"Suffering cats!" said I, getting up and stowing away the banjo. "It's too bad of her, cradle-snatching like this! Go on, you poor innocent, and play doubles with her. Before you know it, you'll be doubled up for life. Why, it's like taking candy from a child!"

"Oh, dry up!" said he. "Your style of humor is crude."

"I may be crude, but I'm not humorous," said I. "If there's anything sadder than to see a good chum with a good boat gobbled up by a girl that will make him cut his friends and sell his boat and——"

"Sell my boat!" shouted Jim. "Why, you poor, blithering idiot, she's crazy about the boat!"

Well, that settled it. I knew then that he was a goner. I didn't say another word, and finally Jim got mad.

"You're a ripping good fellow," says he, "but you're an egotist. Just because you like to cruise in the *Lorelei*, is that a reason why I can't make a friend of a nice, pleasant girl with no nonsense about her? Can't you cruise in the *Lorelei* just the same?"

But I was too crushed and heart-broken to protest at his making out that all my feeling was selfishness. Of course, it was partly selfish—nobody likes to have a friendship of years broken up—but only partly. I felt for Jim, too. I saw him going, nobly unsuspecting and confiding, to his fate,

and I couldn't put out a hand to stop him.

I almost cried that night, rolled in my blanket on the deck, looking at the solemn stars, and listening to the croaking of the frogs in the marshes beyond, and the wash of the waves, and Jim snoring so peacefully. It came over me that it was my last cruise with Jim in the *Lorelei*—the last of our good old careless times.

If we cruised again there would be a Mrs. Jim, blighting everything. If we cruised! Jim flattered himself that he could make a sailor of her! Sleep on, poor soul, and dream your fond dreams! A wild idea of appealing to Miss Wayland came to me; of making love to her, and cutting Jim out, and then sailing away, leaving her on the pier.

Perhaps it was some such lingering notion that made me feel more cheerful in the morning. And, after all, there was a gleam of hope, as long as Jim wasn't actually married or engaged. He seemed the same as usual. I watched him carefully, and could see no signs of absent-mindedness or mooning. I gave him chances to talk about Miss Wayland, and he didn't seem to avoid the subject or to dwell upon it unduly. I began to think we might yet escape.

But my poor hopes went down with a crash as soon as we put into Green Harbor again. The Fat Man, cause of all our woe, had gone home. Miss Wayland took possession of Jim. He played tennis with her, he walked with her, he lunched with her, he took her sailing. He had begun to teach her to sail. It was all up.

Those days were nothing but torment to me. I wanted to get it over with. So I plucked up courage and asked him if the day was set. He laughed and said that there was nothing doing. I thought he was trying to bluff me, but he stuck to it that there was nothing serious. There he was, headed straight for the reef of matrimony, and insisting that the course was perfectly clear. Yes, I believed him at last—I believed that he didn't know where he was going. But *she* knew. I'd seen her look at

Jim as a woman looks at a man when she has marked him for her own.

And she went on, learning to sail, as if the *Lorelei* already belonged to her, and she meant to spend the rest of her life aboard. She learned the names of things, and could manage the tiller under directions. Then they took to going out alone. I was glad to give them the chance, for it was no pleasure to me to watch them. They would repeat sea poetry by the yard to one another—she knew all Jim's favorites, the Swinburne things, and Matthew Arnold, and so on—I believe she must have got the "Golden Treasury" by heart for his benefit.

I contributed only one thing to these symposia, and that was the Wordsworth sonnet beginning, "Where is the land to which yon ship must go?" I repeated it in melancholy tones, with my eyes on Jim, and he never turned a hair. At the end I glanced at Miss Wayland. She was smiling; she understood. After that I left them to themselves on the boat. I had ceased to expect that we would ever leave Green Harbor, unless with Miss Wayland on board.

The days were slipping by—days of glorious sea weather—and the *Lorelei* pulled at her moorings in vain. We were caught—anchored fast. For the first time Jim was deaf to the call of the sea and the *Lorelei's* graces. He had forsaken his first love. A stronger siren had lured him away. And still he denied it. But I could see that Miss Wayland was blooming, looking younger and prettier every day. Her cheeks were pink and pleasingly tanned.

She said it was sailing that gave her that color. Oh, the traitress! Anybody but me would have believed in her love of sailing. How she kept it up! She had a tremendous will—you had only to look at her chin. Jim was a child in her hands.

One day a crowd of us went for an all-day mountain climb. Coming back, I walked part of the way with Miss Wayland. We rested for a while on the crest of a long spur, with the harbor, and the islands, and the sea spread

out below us. We talked about Jim. There was something in the back of my mind that I wanted to say to her.

I told her that Jim and I had been friends ever since prep-school days. The first summer that we spent together was down at Gloucester, where we learned the ways of a boat in the harbor—a dory with a mutton-leg sail. The next summer we hired a little sloop, a fat, tubby thing called the *Grace*. The year after that we clubbed together and bought her. Since then we had always owned a boat, one or the other or both of us. Three years ago, Jim had bought the *Lorelei*.

I described to her how we had worked over that boat; I tried to tell her how much the *Lorelei* meant to us, but the words stuck in my throat. I felt the pathos of my story too much. Our friendship, our passion for boats—our youth; this was the romance now coming to an end. *She* was ending it, and I wanted her to feel it.

I wasn't pleading for myself—I didn't want her to be kind to me, and let me come to visit them sometimes, and go out in the *Lorelei*. No, the old times were over for me—I would take my medicine. It was for Jim that I was pleading. "As you are strong, be merciful." This was my plea. "Spare the friend of my youth. I don't ask you to give him up—I know you wouldn't—but let him keep his boat." This was what I conveyed to her, and she listened, smiling and sphinxlike, drawing a long stalk of grass slowly across her lips.

"You won't understand, of course," I ended sadly. "It's a thing that you grow into, little by little—it takes years—and even then you must have the instinct to start with."

She smiled inscrutably.

"But what makes you think I don't like sailing?" she asked, with perfect assurance.

"You hate the *Lorelei*," I answered her passionately. "And it is very ungrateful of you."

She laughed. She knew what I meant. She had shamelessly used the poor *Lorelei* to get hold of Jim. And having gained her end, she had men-

tally sealed the fate of her rival. Once she had married Jim, she would have no more use for the *Lorelei*—and she would never permit Jim to be reft from her for weeks at a time by his first love. She would permit no divided allegiance. I had felt it all along, and now I saw it clear in a flash. My appeal had glanced off her stony heart. She was pitiless.

I was right; it was the ending. But there was something else that I did not see just then—that it was a beginning, too. Then, I merely wondered if Jim would ever find her out, and how he would feel about it if he did. Well, now I know. And sometimes when I am sailing the *Lorelei*—for I own her now, and Jim has never sailed with me since, and I haven't found anybody quite to take his place—when I am sailing the *Lorelei* in the teeth of a roaring gale, wet through and shivering, I think of Jim, paddling his canoe on the lazy reaches of a sheltered river—for Jim lives a thousand miles from salt water, and in his vacations he takes Edith on long canoeing trips; sometimes they take the baby and a waterproof tent—I think of Jim then, with the old affection, with regret, but without bitterness. For I got a new light on the workings of his mind which showed me that he could be perfectly happy without either me or the *Lorelei*. It happened in this wise:

It was a day soon after my talk with Edith—a blue, but threatening, day, with a falling barometer—and when I found that they were going out in the *Lorelei*, I protested. Jim laughed at me. I ought to have gone along, but they didn't want me, and I was peevish.

They went out about two in the afternoon, over a blue, heaving sea. At three, a storm blew up over the mountains—a thunder squall, followed by a cold, driving rain, and a gale off shore. I hung about the hotel, and watched the harbor and the craft scudding in for shelter, and the choppy, white-tipped waves. The wind increased steadily.

After a while, I borrowed some oilskins and went down to the pier, and

hired a launch, against the time when the *Lorelei* should return to her moorings. I thought that they might put in at one of the islands; but, again, they knew that we would be anxious, and they might try to beat back. It grew dark very early, and it was bitterly cold. The *Lorelei* was over-sparred. I cursed myself for not having gone with them.

While I was tramping up and down in the shed on the pier, staring out over the harbor for a glimpse of the *Lorelei*'s slim whiteness, and full of bitter reflections about Edith and the folly of Jim, it suddenly came over me: How that girl must love him! To conquer her fear—for she was afraid, even on a quiet day—and to go out on a day like this, in the teeth of my warning—it took pluck, yes, lots of it! Unwillingly, I felt respect and even admiration for her nerve. If they got back all right I would take off my hat to her. If they got back!

I kept reminding myself that it was idiotic of me to worry, that Jim was a good sailor, and knew what he was about. Yes, but he was a dare-devil, too, and he would take risks. It was a bad two hours that I spent on the pier. A few old salts hung about in the shed and shook their heads, and didn't add to my comfort any.

It was after six, and pitch dark, when I made out a dim, moving shape in the flash of the lighthouse at the mouth of the harbor. My heart leaped—it was the *Lorelei*, tacking in under her jib. She came about, and I lost sight of her. Then I heard Jim's hail faintly through the roar of the wind. When I climbed on board, Jim roared out to me:

"Help, she's fainted!"

There he was, soaked and wild-eyed, holding Edith in his arms.

"She stuck to the tiller till we got in!" he shouted in my ear. "I believe I've killed her! The poor little thing! Got some whisky?—quick!"

Then he began kissing her white, wet face, her closed eyelids, and dripping hair.

"My darling! My love!" he cried.

It was a strange voice—and a strange feeling it gave me, there in the midst of the tossing waves and howling wind.

"We must get her into the launch—we must get her into the launch," I kept saying.

Jim gathered her up to his breast, and then I believe he began to cry. And then she came to, at least her arms went around Jim's neck, and clung there. It struck me that I was watching something that shouldn't have had any spectators. It came over me that I had seen Jim kiss her for the first time. If I hadn't had to get those two drenched, half-frozen people to shore, I should certainly have removed myself. And then I suppose they would have stayed right there. As it was, I had almost to drag them away.

Jim and I stayed at the hotel that night. He borrowed some clothes, and we got something to eat. He was rather shaky and absent-minded.

"I tell you," he said solemnly, "it was a near thing. There was one time when I thought we were gone. And to think I took her into *that*—" He choked and muttered something about "the cursed boat."

After our meal he sent up to inquire after Edith, and then he went up to see her. He stayed some two hours—and when he came back he had certainly a shining morning face. He beat around the bush conversationally for a while, and then he said to me shyly:

"Look here, old fellow, you wouldn't think that a girl like Edith could really care anything about *me*—would you?"

"Wouldn't dream it could be possible," I said solemnly.

"Well, she does. I can hardly believe it myself," said he, in a brown study, standing there, ramming the tobacco into his pipe, and spilling it all over the floor. "I really can't believe it," and he looked across at me with bewildered eyes. "But she does!" he repeated softly.

He lit his pipe, after several attempts, and broke the silence, having been too much absorbed to notice that I was silent, or that I was watching his brooding face.

"And look here, what do you think she told me?" he said, with a shamefaced and flattered smile. "*She told me that she hated boats!* She said that she only went out in my boat to please me, and because she wanted to be with me, and that she was frightened out of her life almost every time. Think of that! Think of the pluck of it! Actually scared, you know, and yet never letting on! Think of her doing *that*—for me—"

Jim gazed at me, with tears in his radiant eyes.

"What do you say to that?" he demanded solemnly.

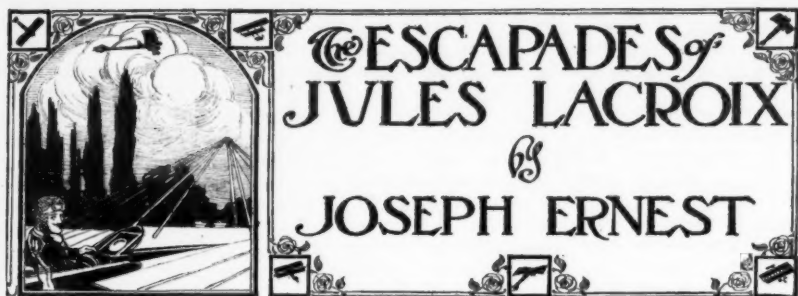
There wasn't anything I could say. I got up and warmly shook his hands.



THE SPELL OF LOVE

LOVE used to have four letters—L,
O, V, and E—that was the spell!
But now I use but one, a small,
Wee vowel tells the story all—
And tells it mighty sweetly, too—
That letter, Dearest Heart, is "U!"

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.



III.—The Episode of the Aërial Duel

CRENOM! Yes, my poor friend, in me you behold a man overtaken by swift and inevitable catastrophe. No, it is not that my suit has been rejected either by Miss Warren, my beautiful pupil in aviation, or by Mademoiselle d'Orly, whom I had the honor to render some small assistance in the matter of the Merigord pearls. For while I adore the gracious Miss Warren, how can I offer my hand to the beautiful Mademoiselle d'Orly? And until I cease to worship the fascinating Suzanne d'Orly, which will be never—I swear it to the great Never!—how can I aspire to the hand of the superb Miss Warren, who nevertheless will always command my most distinguished sentiments?

No, the disaster is of a quite different nature. Monsieur has not noticed the ribbon in my buttonhole? Yes, I am decorated—none may escape! The minister of the interior has proposed me for the Legion of Honor—ostensibly because I located from my *aéroplane* the sunken submarine *Goubet* in time to permit of salvage operations before the crew perished. But in reality for a reason more interesting and less discussed.

Monsieur is aware that, since I was able to recover for Madame the Comtesse of Clermont-Merigord her stolen pearls, my list of pupils has grown to such dimensions that it has been necessary to establish a flying school of my

own at the camp of Bar-le-Duc. I—Lacroix, former mechanician, and man of the people—am accepted tutor of the art of flight to the fashionable world of Paris; and at fees which are frankly most excessive! I grow, I develop, I engage instructors. In my hangars are three monoplanes and two biplanes.

It is true—I confess it—I am decorated principally because I have been a fool. Therein, however, I am by no means singular, as all Paris well knows. But what to do? I am torn between two conflicting passions. If I could anticipate that either lady would reject me, the matter would become of a simplicity most beautiful. It would remain only to marry the other! But as it is, there is the danger that the wrong one—which, I do not know—would accept.

Is it any wonder, then, in my distracted condition, when the pretty Mademoiselle Gayol appears at Bar-le-Duc demanding tuition, that I should at once seek relief in devotion to her progress in the management of her biplane?

Never have I met such a woman. What nerve, what sublime courage, what strength and delicacy of self-control! You must picture her as being tall, lithe as a panther, straight as an arrow, with yellow hair coiled low on the neck, a face sweetly melancholy, with eyes of blue, but so large in the pupils that they appear to be of a penetrant black.

She becomes at once a student *au*

grand sérieux, not attending merely for the amusement of passenger flights, as in the case of my society ladies. She informs me that she desires urgently to learn the control of the biplane, looking forward with enthusiasm to the day when she will make her first solo flight.

At first, monsieur, the pupil in aviation merely "rolls." The controls of the machine are fixed so that one cannot ascend into the air. One scurries over the field upon one's landing wheels, and makes hops.

"But how long, Monsieur Lacroix?" she would demand, having accomplished these exercises in a manner unexceptionable for some days. "I have not broken so much as a stick. When may I really fly?"

"Mademoiselle, I guard for you," I would reply, "an admiration fervent and without reserve. It is therefore difficult to refuse you anything. But it would be still harder to see damaged a single one of your charms innumerable. In addition, it would not have the effect to encourage my other pupils if you were to break your so graceful neck. We will, therefore, proceed with tuition according to rule."

I decided that it would be well to remove some of her confidence, and proceeded to take her for an instruction flight in a large passenger biplane. The machine had been fitted with a new and heavy motor mounted far forward, which caused it to assume in flight what we call the piqué attitude—with the tail too high. However, this did not appear to present any great danger, and as we mounted above the flying ground in sweeping circles I forgot the circumstance in the beauty of the setting sun, and the exhilaration of strong and rapid flight with a companion altogether charming and sympathetic.

That glorious western sky, the fiery gleams of the sun reflected by the polished motor, the tints of rose color on the white wings of the biplane, will ever remain vividly in my memory—for when I sought to reach the earth in a spiral dive, we fell!

The new motor had thrown the machine slightly out of balance, making

recovery from a steep dive impossible by the ordinary means.

With terrible rapidity we descended at an angle that grew steeper every second. It seemed that directly beneath me, as I leaned back on the elevator lever for dear life, the green earth was rushing upward, revolving giddily. I recall the antlike figures of spectators running and gesticulating, of *aéroplanes* engaged in rolling practice that scattered like frightened fowls, scurrying over the ground in all directions, with outstretched wings. I recall the dilated eyes of Mademoiselle Gayol, appearing more than ever of a penetrant blackness. I recall her little shriek of "*La, la!*" and the whiteness of her jeweled knuckles as she steadied herself by the stay in front of me.

But, as monsieur is aware, I had long made a specialty of the spiral dive in public exhibitions, and had discovered the secret of restoring stability in a manner altogether unexpected. At the best of times the angle of descent is liable to become too steep, and the dive to resolve itself into an almost perpendicular *chute*. The elevator lever in such cases is useless to restore horizontal flight, but the rudder acts, on the other hand, in a manner almost miraculous.

It was so, happily, in this case. With my right foot I pushed over the rudder lever with all my strength against the air stream of our descent, and at a bare eighty feet from the ground we slid smoothly once more into normal flight.

For myself, I admit having breathed more easily; and it was without a moment's delay that I alighted on solid ground before the hangars. Monsieur knows that it is my boast that I have never injured a passenger. It would have been annoying—is it not so?—to spoil my record so unique.

But mademoiselle, the ineffable Gayol! She alighted without apparent concern, not even availing herself of the hand that I held up to assist her. Her pale, rather sad, face had none but the customary expression of thoughtful melancholy.

"I perceive, monsieur," she said, in

a voice without a tremor, "that if a spiral dive becomes too steep it is necessary that one should rudder outward."

I sat down upon the grass, and struggled for words.

"Did you also fail to perceive, *chère mademoiselle*," I demanded, "that you were within a few seconds of most definite and painless extinction?"

"With me, Monsieur Lacroix, as doubtless with yourself," responded this most extraordinary woman, "that was by no means a novel experience."

"But at least you will admit that there are many things to be well learned before I can permit you to ascend alone?"

She shrugged her shoulders, and pouted a little.

"I desire merely to fly, *cher maître*," she said. "Myself I have no ambition to perform aerial gymnastics for a gaping public."

I rose again, and bowed over her hand.

"You are superb!" I said. "You are my best pupil. For you there are no longer any rules. Henceforth I charge myself with your daily instruction."

By this time a crowd of aviators, pupils, and mechanics had run up, eagerly discussing our perilous maneuver. One seizes the hand of Mademoiselle Gayol, kisses it fervently, and murmurs expressions of delight at what he is pleased to term her fortunate escape. He is a new pupil of the name of Ducellier, who had commenced tuition shortly after mademoiselle. I had observed that he sought her company on every occasion.

"Monsieur will pardon the question," I interrupted, a little nettled; "but is it suggested that I had lost control of my biplane?"

Ducellier halted, embarrassed. He explained that he had no intention to suggest anything except gratitude for the safety of Mademoiselle Gayol. Whereupon, I offered her my arm, and we departed for the hangars without further controversy. Ducellier followed for a few steps, then fell reluctantly behind. He had the air of a man con-

sumed by a hopeless and unrequited passion—a tall and somber individual, with the habit of projecting his enormous nose ahead as he walked.

Although it was plain that mademoiselle was uninterested in him, his affair had rapidly developed from bad to worse in the period of their tuition together. He was accustomed to follow her like a lap dog, assisting her to mount and dismount, waiting to receive her flying casquette when she removed it from her shock of corn-colored curls. The most faithful of imaginable admirers, he received nothing but rebuffs, which increased in intensity and emphasis when he persisted in ignoring them. The whole flying camp followed the affair with amusement and not a little pity, calling Ducellier "Cyrano" because of his nose.

Myself, I could not resent a rivalry so hopeless. In addition, I was not sure whether I was really enamored of mademoiselle.

"She is pretty, courageous, a born flying woman," I told myself. "It is the intellectual passion, which is always disappointing. Beware, therefore, *mon vieux*!" In consequence, I did not seek to relieve her altogether of the society of Ducellier.

On one occasion, after I had seen mademoiselle depart after giving her the customary daily tuition flight, I came upon him seated in the hangar in a state of deepest dejection.

"My poor friend," I said, "do not let this unhappy affair destroy your peace of mind. To fly requires an unruffled nerve." But he refused consolation.

"All is finished," he groaned. "To-day on departing she called me *pie-de-choux*! Cabbage foot! It is the final insult."

He continued, however, to seek her society, and presently Mademoiselle Gayol tired of repulsing him, and even permitted him to offer her small attentions. To hold her hand as she mounted her biplane, to pass her a wrench, to run to the hangar for her gloves, to assist in replenishing her tanks of gasoline and oil, appeared to raise him

to heights incredible of happiness beyond which his imagination could not proceed. Whatever belonged to her, whatever she had touched, was to him an object of sacred interest. In this idea, I observed, the mechanics encouraged him, thereby saving themselves considerable labor.

As to his own flying exploits, they consisted in buzzing round the practice field like an angry wasp, mostly with the landing wheels firmly on the ground. Only now and then did he venture on short hops, heaving himself clumsily into the air, and as grotesquely returning to earth. He broke more wood in this process than any pupil I had ever seen.

"There exist, monsieur," I said to him one day, when the mechanics brought back his machine *en panne* for the second time that week, "some people who possess the instinct of flight. They are born with it, in effect. On the other hand, there are those who can never learn, though in other respects doubtless estimable persons. Your own incapacity, if I may say so, amounts to genius."

"Nevertheless, I intend to persevere," he replied, with unruffled countenance.

But on the day that I pronounced Mademoiselle Gayol as proficient, and arranged for her forthwith to pass the tests for her *aéro club* brevet, the poor "Cyrano" was still in the rolling stage. It was then that the extraordinary chain of events occurred which so nearly cost mademoiselle her life, commencing in a series of the most unconscionable acts of *sabotage*, or willful and malignant damage to the mechanism of the *aéroplanes*.

Arriving one morning at the flying ground, I found the early mechanics in a condition of excitement of the most violent. They ran up to me with cries and gesticulations, pointing to the hangar of Mademoiselle Gayol. The doors stood open, and the great shed was empty. I looked up to the sky. There was no sign of the missing biplane.

"It is some accident," I cried. "Disaster must have befallen mademoiselle." And I blamed myself bitterly for hav-

ing given her permission so early to practice alone.

I led the clamoring group to the shed in which my own favorite monoplane was kept. Ducellier, who arrived at the moment, and at once detected the situation, ran at my elbow like a man demented. His eyes glared wildly, his hair stood on end in the morning breeze.

As soon as the motor had been started I sprang into the pilot's seat, with the idea that by mounting at once to a height I would envisage a large tract of country in which the white planes of mademoiselle's machine, in case some accident had befallen her, could not easily escape the eye.

But in my haste I failed to make any examination of the controls, as was usually my custom. Instead, I accelerated the motor, gave the signal of release, and shot up into the air as steeply as I dared. Striking a wind eddy, the machine at once heeled over, and I moved the steering lever to correct it. To my utter dismay, the effect of the lever was diametrically reversed.

The monoplane canted over to a dangerous angle. The more I thrust over the lever, the more drunkenly it reeled, until finally its wings no longer supported it, and it slid sideways thirty feet onto a railway embankment that skirted the ground, smashing a wing.

My flying helmet of leather and steel was seriously dented by one of the bracing rods of the *cabane* surrounding the pilot's seat, but I was strapped in the seat, and sustained no serious hurt. When the crowd ran up I had, according to custom in such cases, lit a cigarette, and was busily engaged in an inspection of the wrecked landing mechanism.

It was as I suspected. The wire cables controlling the wing warping had been deliberately crossed, so that any effort to restore the machine to balance in the air would serve merely to exaggerate the fault it was sought to correct.

Some assassin, by a few moments' labor, had made the machine incapable of more than a hundred yards' flight—a

flight ending also in inevitable damage. I tore the mechanics away.

"*Sapristi!* Leave it," I commanded them. "There are other machines. Be calm! We must hasten."

We raced back to the hangars, and brought forth one of the slower monoplanes remaining. The men swarmed over it like ants, examining every rod and stay, and testing all controls. It appeared to be intact. But suddenly one gave a cry of rage.

"*Diable!* There is not any *essence!*" he shrieked, and marched away from the machine, waving his hands above his head in despair.

And, in truth, the gasoline tank was empty. The drain tap had been maliciously opened, and the very lifeblood of the motor allowed to escape. I choked with anger. I shook my fists at the heavens. One ran to me, exclaiming that the tanks of the remaining machines were also dry.

"*N'importe!*" I cried. "It is nothing! The plan so diabolical has failed. Enough will remain at the bottom of the tank for some moments of flight, which will suffice to obtain a view of the country. I am calm! I am on my guard! I will be able to plane down in safety should the motor cease. Aloft then, my children!"

At once they started the propeller, and I rose rapidly, taking care to keep under me a good landing ground in case the gasoline should become suddenly exhausted. Just as I had attained the height of eight hundred feet, and a change in the note of the motor signified that I must prepare to descend, I perceived, some miles to the north of the camp, a blotch of white against some poplars that could be nothing but the biplane of mademoiselle.

With a heavy heart, I planed down to the hangars, and ordered out the relief automobile. Ducellier pleaded so hard to accompany the rescue party that I gave him a seat in order to be rid of his importunities.

After all, was there not a bond of sympathy between us? I, too, was torn, not by one, but by two hopeless passions! My heart softened toward the

miserable man as we sped along the white, straight road to the north, where I had seen the biplane of Mademoiselle Gayol lying crumpled like a piece of waste paper.

We arrive; we turn up a side road on two wheels in our haste. We leap from the car while it is still traveling at a dangerous speed. Ducellier, running like an escaped maniac, beats us all to the pathetic mass of twisted wood and torn canvas. In my fancy as I run behind him, I already see the inert form of the slim, delicate Mademoiselle Gayol, with those intense black eyes fixed in the horror of inevitable fate.

But when we arrived at the side of the wreck, and drew back the curtains of tattered tissue that concealed the fuselage, there was no sign of the biplane's pilot. The seats were vacant.

"Some peasants have perhaps found her and borne her away," cried Ducellier, in an ecstasy of unrestrained emotion. "To the village!"

"No—back to the hangars," I said. "It is there that they will carry the first news."

And back we hurried at grand speed. Figure to yourself our astonishment and joy on entering the aviation ground to overtake on the way to the sheds no other than mademoiselle herself—fresh, dainty, graceful, *soignée* to the last button and the last curl!

She greeted us with the same little smile, in which there was always a suspicion of tristesse and artificiality, perhaps—a smile in which those black, penetrant eyes appeared to have no part. But it quickly changed to an expression of the blankest astonishment as we precipitated ourselves from the auto with a volley of questions.

"But, messieurs, I have only just arrived here!" she responds, shrinking a little from us, as if she suspected our sanity. "How can I have fallen in the biplane, seeing that I have just arisen for the first time this morning?"

Mystère! It appeared, then, that some one had attempted to steal the biplane; but who, and for what reason, we were perfectly unable to guess. One circumstance, however, leaped to the

eye. Standing before the wreck of the machine when it was hauled back for repair, I saw in a moment that the fall had been due to a failure of the motor, of which the valve rods protruded in every direction.

Presently one bursts from the machine shop and summons me. I see the interior mechanism laid bare, all jammed and twisted.

"What is it that this is, then?" I demand, almost speechless with wonder. In answer, the mechanic flourishes beneath my nose a large steel bolt.

"Monsieur will recall," he whispers, "that the crank chamber of the machine of mademoiselle was open for inspection during two hours yesterday. It was doubtless then that some wretch inserted this bolt, which is no part of the mechanism."

Again mystery! To have stolen a biplane was in any event an act little comprehensible. But the bolt which had wrecked the mechanism gave one furiously to think. The thief would not have dared to ascend in the machine if he had known that it was certain to fail him within a few minutes. Obviously therefore the *sabotage* was the act of another, and was committed without the knowledge of the actual thief, whose plans it had, indeed, defeated.

Under the microscope in my private workshop, I was able to identify the bolt as composed of a special toughened steel alloy, which found itself in only one place on the flying ground. It was of the type used in the mounting of the motor of Ducellier's *aéroplane*, and without doubt had emanated from the box of spare parts in his hangar. Of course, between suspicion and proof lay great difficulty, for others also had access to the box. But I took an early opportunity to discuss the theft of the biplane with him.

"I have my theory, it is true," he said. "I imagine that the automobile bandits have turned their attention to the air." I started. All Paris was discussing this gang, and their thefts so daring of automobiles for the purpose of their bank raids.

"But that is absurd!" I cried. "They are all arrested, except their leader, Moreau."

"Precisely," replied Ducellier enigmatically, and departed without further discussion. He was the only man on the flying ground who had a theory of any kind to explain these mysterious events. As I pondered over this circumstance, I felt convinced that he could have offered the true explanation. But I was equally powerless to force it from him.

The mystery of the theft, no less than the greater mystery of the acts of murderous *sabotage*, left me in I know not what state of turbulent anxiety. It was as if invisible strands of fate were twining themselves about me, which I could neither see nor unravel. I inspected and flew each *aéroplane* before a pupil was allowed to ascend. I took rooms in the village, unable to return to Paris.

That the disappointed thief would dare to repeat his experiment so insolent seemed to be highly improbable. I judged that one experience of a wrecked motor in mid-air would be sufficient to discourage the most hardened. But this other miscreant, who committed willful damage to the mechanism, had suffered no such stern warning. Whatever the motive for his proceedings, there was no reason to suppose that they would not be repeated. I arranged for a relay of mechanics to watch the hangars, so that at least one should be on guard night and day.

That night I could not sleep. The sensation of vague, impending catastrophe was intolerable. I arose, therefore, shortly before dawn, and made my way toward the flying school. I was still some distance from the hangars when the sound of an *aéro* motor seemed to answer and confirm my worst fears. With a cry of anger and despair, I broke into a run.

I heard the motor accelerate to a roar, I heard the roar recede to a buzz in the distance as the machine made its preliminary run across the flying ground. Faster I ran, stumbling and cursing in the dark. Then across the

first livid streak of dawn there arose in full flight the form so unmistakable of my other biplane. I was too late—the thief, with an insolence unheard of, had tried a second time, and had succeeded.

With a heart full of anger and despair, I hastened to the sheds. There was no sign of the mechanic who should have been on guard at the time—a Breton of the most trustworthy and faithful. Silently I visited in turn each hangar without result. Finally I entered the workshop, and there on the ground before me lay the prostrate form of the unhappy mechanic, and standing over him in the feeble rays of the solitary lamp, an automatic pistol in his hand, was the man Ducellier!

With a cry of rage and vengeance, I hurled myself upon him, and his weapon flew clattering among the tools and gasoline cans on the workbench. For several moments we strove together, locked and almost motionless. But I had taken him by surprise, and held the advantage.

"Assassin!" I hissed. "Desist at once, or I deliver you a blow of foot to the stomach!"

To my amazement, I felt his grip on my throat relax.

"Lacroix!" he cried. "But this is indeed a stroke of good luck!" He released me, and his arms dropped to his side. At once I leaped upon the pistol, and covered him.

"It is unnecessary," he protested, spreading his hands. "Monsieur sees that I have no desire but to be of assistance."

"What of this?" I demanded threateningly, pointing to the prostrate figure of my assistant. Ducellier shrugged his shoulders, and indicated a cup on the workbench.

"He appears to have drunk drugged coffee," he said. "I have just failed to wake him. But I assure you that it is only a heavy sleep. Do not, I beg you, be deceived by the appearances. There is yet time to go in pursuit of the bandits if you will hasten. The

large monoplane has a new wing, and is intact."

"*Misérable!*" I cried, drawing from my pocket the steel bolt, and shaking it under his eyes with one hand while the other still held the pistol to his tremendous nose. "Wretch! How do I know that you have not put one of these in the motor?"

He started, and stammered I know not what clumsy disclaimer.

"Dare you then accompany me as passenger?" I persisted. "No! You shuffle, you hesitate, you are——"

"On the contrary," he interrupted, "it is what I most urgently desire. I was about to venture the proposal myself. But hasten, I beg of you! Every minute increases the chances of escape."

He was so obviously in earnest that I decided to risk the attempt, knowing as I did that the confrères of my unfortunate mechanic would soon arrive on the scene to his aid. Still holding the pistol in readiness, therefore, I seized Ducellier by the arm, and pushed him at a gallop before me in the direction of the shed wherein the swiftest monoplane was kept. I made him ascend into the passenger seat, whence he could operate the controls while I watched the effect. He complied with eager impatience.

"Be calm, *mon cher monsieur*," he urged. "I assure you that no one has tampered with the machine. I myself have taken care of that."

"How so?"

"I have slept in the pilot's seat all night, wakening only at the sound of the stolen biplane."

It was precisely as he had said. The machine was perfect, as my mechanics had left it after effecting repairs the previous day. I started the motor with a single tug at the propeller, bounding like a chamois into the pilot's seat as the machine rushed erratically out of the hangar and across the turf. In another moment I had seized the controls, and we were aloft.

Day was now dawning. We wheeled sharply over the hangars in the direction taken by the stolen biplane, and

scanned the pale-tinted sky anxiously for a glimpse of the fugitives. But there was not yet sufficient light to make them visible at such a distance.

Ducellier approached his mouth to my ear, shouting above the roar of the motor.

"Direction of Verdun!" he repeated, with insistence.

I regarded him with renewed suspicion. It seemed a palpable device to throw me off the scent. Ducellier, gesticulating with both hands, argued unintelligibly for a time. At last I caught the words, "To the frontier!"

This seemed reasonable. Doubtless the thieves would endeavor to elude pursuit by landing on foreign soil. The nearest point on the frontier was Verdun. Accordingly we steered in that direction. Slight as was the chance, there appeared to be no reason to take any other.

In the result the sincerity of Ducellier appeared to be demonstrated. For in a surprisingly short space of time, even allowing for the high speed of our machine, he was the first to descry the stolen biplane winging its way at a thousand feet into the eastern sky. In five minutes we could distinguish the muffled figures of its two occupants. In ten minutes we had almost overtaken it.

We saw the passenger turn in his seat and extend his hand in our direction. At the same moment a sharp report proceeded from the biplane.

"Ha! Their motor has *des ratés*!" I cried joyously. "They cannot make the frontier. We have settled their affair!"

Another report followed, and another. Something plowed across the top of the wing at my right, tearing away a strip of the covering tissue that hung loose and fluttered in the gale of our flight. I exchanged glances with Ducellier, who swore loudly, and grasped at the pistol which I still held in my hand. With bursting indignation I realized that the passenger of the stolen biplane was firing upon us.

Steadying his arm on the front of the *cabane*, Ducellier endeavored to re-

ply. But I knew that his weapon was merely a thing of the pocket, without accuracy, and little better than useless at the range.

I turned aside sharply, therefore, and mounted at a daring angle until the wings of our monoplane concealed us from the view of the fugitives. As we turned to pursue once more, Ducellier fired rapidly in the hope of striking by chance some vital part of the biplane's mechanism, for the occupants of the other machine were equally concealed from our sight by their position between the double planes. But his bullets were without effect.

At the same moment it became possible to distinguish the fortress of Verdun and the frontier. Immediate action was a necessity—but what to do? Ducellier waved his arms and cursed aloud in impotent rage.

It was then that the inspiration came to me to employ a trick which is prohibited by the strictest regulations in *aéroplane* racing. We were flying, *monsieur* recalls, a little above the biplane, and some distance behind it. The position was of the most favorable, and I decided to risk everything upon the single coup.

First I braced my feet firmly against the framework in front of me, and signed to Ducellier to do likewise. Then, with motor still roaring at full power, I tilted the tail sharply upward with a powerful movement of the lever, and down we shot in a headlong dive through the biting morning air, our descent aimed straight as a bullet at the fleeing biplane beneath us.

The air screamed past our ears, tore at our flying garments, and blew out the cheeks of Ducellier ludicrously when he opened his mouth to roar in dismay. For he told me later that he had the conviction that I was demented with anger, and that I was seeking to involve both machines in destruction by a collision in mid-air.

But though it was a serious risk, I knew well the possibilities of the powerful monoplane I was steering. Gradually pulling back the lever as we neared the fugitives, I decreased by de-

grees the steepness of our descent. Finally, at the moment we regained a horizontal position, we shot directly above the biplane, avoiding a collision by less than ten feet.

The result is imaginable only to those who have felt the violent backwash from the planes of a powerful machine in rapid flight. The biplane was literally blown to earth!

With a skilled pilot, flying at a considerable height, there would have been every chance to recover balance in time to make a safe landing. But I saw at once, to my horror, that the pilot of the biplane was by no means skillful. Looking backward as we shot ahead of the fugitives, we saw their machine shiver like a feather in the sudden current, then dive and drop in circles of continually smaller and smaller radius. In the bare second that was required to transform the involuntary dive into a steep fall, the pilot, taken by surprise, had hesitated. The opportunity was lost.

Swooping round to follow them in that sickening spiral dive, the memory of my first sunset flight with Mademoiselle Gayol flashed across the mind with irresistible clarity. There was one way, and only one way, in which they might avoid instant destruction. In horror, I shouted aloud at them, though I knew they could not hear me.

"Rudder out! Rudder out!" I cried, like a man possessed.

And as if in answer to the cry, I saw the rudder of the falling biplane swing suddenly outward, and pushed a great cry of joy as the machine curved gracefully into correct gliding position.

The effort, for all that, had come too late to prevent disaster. The machine landed badly in a plowed field. Driving aslant the furrows, it tore off its landing chassis. I saw the delicate planes crumple as they struck the ground.

With a heart sick with remorse and pity, I glided to earth, for in my ears once more it seemed that a silvery voice cried "*La, la!*" in sudden fear; I had a vision of a slim, little, jeweled hand

whose knuckles whitened as they grasped in apprehension a stay in front of me, of a pair of blue eyes whose pupils were dilated until they appeared to be of the blackness of jet.

Heedless of the warnings of Ducellier, careless of the pistol of the biplane's passenger, I ran up to the wrecked machine with all my legs. And as I drew near I recognized in the foremost of the two motionless forms that hung over its side the figure of my favorite pupil, Mademoiselle Gayol.

I lifted her tenderly from the pilot's seat, and the unhappy girl opened her eyes and smiled at me the same melancholy smile.

"Forgive me, Monsieur Lacroix," she murmured painfully. "I have ill repaid you, but at least I remembered—to rudder outward—in a spiral fall!"

It was not until I had satisfied myself that she was suffering merely from shock that I looked up to attend to her companion. The passenger was sitting up in his seat, and holding his hands in a dazed way to his head. I saw that they were joined by a pair of polished manacles, and beside him stood Ducellier with a gleam of triumph in his eye.

"It is Moreau," he said, "the anarchist, the organizer of the automobile bandits. He has eluded us for months. Apparently he has been sleeping in a stable in the village. He is the real lover of mademoiselle."

"And who is mademoiselle?" I asked, aghast.

"She is Odette l'Asperge, known to her own circle as '*La Reine Jaune*,' and also a dangerous anarchist. But you may remain tranquil—I do not want her. It is a sufficiently good day's work to capture Moreau."

"And may I have the honor to know who the devil you are yourself?"

Ducellier was engaged in a rapid examination of the pockets of his captive, and replied, without turning his head.

"I am Jacques Guerin, special agent of the *Sûreté*, and entirely at the service of monsieur," he said calmly.

Later, when Moreau was in jail and

mademoiselle in hospital, I remembered with a flush of anger the repeated attacks upon the *aéroplanes* at Bar-le-Duc.

"But who is it," I demanded, "who has been guilty of this *sabotage*?"

"All three of us," responded the astonishing Guerin. "When I was ordered to watch mademoiselle, since her lover had eluded the police of all France for six months, I endeavored to make the biplanes useless in order to prevent precisely the attempt that she has made to take him safely out of the country. As monsieur recalls, I tried to learn to fly, and failed miserably. Mademoiselle, on the other hand, rapidly qualified. But with both the biplanes put out of commission she would have been helpless, for she cannot fly the monoplane. On her part, mademoiselle, or an accomplice, has endeavored to wreck the monoplanes, which are swifter, in order that they should be useless in pursuit. When you yourself became alarmed, and set a watch which

protected the second biplane, I took pains to see also that the swiftest of the monoplanes was secure from interference. That is why I slept in the hangar last night."

"It was, then, in reality mademoiselle herself who stole the first biplane also?"

"Of course," he replied, with a reminiscent shrug. "That was the reason of my agitation at the time. I had thought that the steel bolt I had placed in the motor would make flight impossible. It turned out that it did not take effect and wreck the motor until she was in the air, and her escape from injury was indeed fortunate. She is accused of no crime, and I had no wish to cause her harm."

Well, I am recompensed by the ministry of the interior. Pupils flock to my flying ground. More, I am decorated! But there is no doubt that I was a fool. The intellectual passion, *mon ami*, is always the most deceitful and dangerous. Is it not so?



A WANDER SONG TO ORDER

A WANDER SONG" you bid me sing?

A very simple task you bring,
I'll lilt you how "my duties pall,"
And how "from out my office wall
I pine to flee like birds awing!"

I'll carol how "I long to fling
Aside the Cares that to me cling,"
(That's always part of what you call
A "Wander Song!")

I'll trill of "luring days of Spring,"
And how "the Rover is a King,"
Of "Comrades true and roads that thrall,"
And "blue skies smiling over all,"
—Oh, it is such an Easy thing,
A Wander Song!

BERTON BRALEY.

The Rose That Came Every Morning

By
Richard Le Gallienne

SHE had grown so sadly accustomed to the vulgar compliment of flowers that she almost hated the beautiful things that common men put to such base uses." Sitting in front of her typewriter, seven hours a day, in the foyer of a great New York hotel, young and beautiful, she had become almost tragically weary of what her experience—too seldom varied by a consoling exception—had brought her to regard as the insulting admiration of man.

There was wisdom under the coiled gold of her vinelike hair; and beneath the blossom of her face, and the grave grace of her slim figure, was the proud purity of a girl whose only disadvantage in the world was the poverty of a father and mother whom she loved, somewhat defeated makers of a home full of all noble and gentle influences.

It was for them and for that fair home that she sat at her typewriting each day; and the mere work of it was nothing, nothing but gladness, as she thought of them. Its only hardship, strange as it may sound, were the flowers that, each morning, were there on her desk, flowers often exotic and costly, the money paid for which would have taken her old mother and father in wintertime to one of those warm and sunny places down South by the sea, of which, as the cold got hold of their old bones and their thinning blood, they sometimes wistfully spoke.

The waste of money in this world—easily come to some who spend it, but so hard earned by unthought of and unknown others—how often she thought of that! And because she loved beauty more than money, she thought oftenest of the waste of beautiful flowers. For of what use to her were the flowers that came to her each morning? She could not wear them, or even keep them by her on her desk—for to do so would be to seem to accept the odious admiration, so called, that they were employed to represent. For flowers, alas! had become to her the symbols of the fools and cads—those were not her own words—who took advantage of her doing her day's work—with a beautiful face.

If she could only have left her good looks at home—as some women seem to do, or as workmen save their good clothes by overalls—she knew well enough that her desk would have gone from December to December without a single flower.

Often she thought that the flowers thrown into a grave were far less wasted; for they mean real love—and nothing is wasted that means love. So, thinking of that, she would sometimes give her flowers to the scrubwomen who knew every inch of the great hotel on their knees, and to whom no men thought of sending flowers; and, again, she would carry them to some sick friend in a hospital. So, she would say to herself with a rather cynical smile, the flowers were not wasted, after all.

One morning, however, she found waiting on her desk a small package; and, on opening it, she found in it a single rose. It was a very beautiful rose, of a strangely exquisite yellow, seldom seen even in the windows of the great florists, and it was swathed and boxed with evident care. But there was no indication of the sender, no card inclosed—nor did the box bear the label of any Fifth Avenue department store of flowers.

It was the first time that a flower had ever come to her like that. Usually her flowers came to her in huge, tasteless bouquets, in boxes three feet long, a great festoon of satin ribbon tied in foolish loops about their stems. The florist was always the most expensive in New York, and the sender's name was never left a mystery. His foolish handwriting always made that clear, and his name was seldom unaccompanied by some fatuous statement of feelings that he would never have dared to make—except to some girl working for her living, and presumably unprotected by fathers with bank accounts and brothers at Yale.

Of course, all the men she had to deal with were not like that. There were gray, solid, fifty-year-old men, who, she knew at a glance, had daughters of their own; there were clean-built, fresh-skinned, and clear-eyed young men, who, she knew, had sisters; there were men young and old who, she knew instinctively, by some unmistakable look in their faces, had wives whom they loved. There were also dreaming lads hardly out of college, healthy and sweet, who meant nothing by their frank, yet shy, admiration of her face.

All these she knew and was gladdened by; knowing from them that there were real men in the world. And the mere abrupt business man, who asked her to take down a letter as if she were a machine—exactly as she used her own typewriter—him she knew and liked. It was such a relief to be treated merely as a machine.

Yet, of course, she was a woman, after all, a young and beautiful girl, and that single yellow rose brought back

to her the dream that every beautiful girl has dreamed since the beginning of the world.

Was there really somewhere upon the earth the one man who, out of all the beautiful faces of the world, had found her face—the one man seeking the one woman that was she?

Of course, it was only her old fairy tales talking to her. Yet she hesitated as to what she should do with her yellow rose. She would not put it in a glass, and surely not wear it in her bosom; she couldn't, she felt, give it to one of the scrubwomen. As she hesitated, an important masculine presence loomed over her, to dictate a letter—so she slipped the rose quietly into a drawer of her desk.

He had not sent it. That was quite certain. A great, big, kind-hearted, six-foot-three fellow, out of the Far West—and when she had taken down his letter, and he had gone, she half opened the drawer and looked at the rose, and wondered who its sender could be.

Next morning there came another rose—just the same way—and the next morning, and the next. So it went on for seven days, and then came another single rose—rare and delicate as the others, but this time of a wonderful whiteness, silver as the moon.

And the single roses that thus came to her grew to have a meaning to her—she could not say what; at all events, it was a meaning of something kind toward her in the world. So she neither wore her roses, nor gave them away to scrubwomen or to hospitals, but every day hid them away in the drawers of her desk—till the right-hand side of her desk was filled with hidden roses, which, in the intervals of her work, she would look at—and from which would breathe up to her the fragrance of an unknown devotion.

Long since she had scanned the faces of the men who came and asked her to take down letters or dictated their specifications in the clear-cut prose of the American business man. The men who had sent her those three-foot boxes of flowers with ribbons never left her in any doubt as to the sender. They

were always pressing their questioning faces near to hers, to ask—about the fate of their horrible flowers.

But no one came to ask the fate of the one beautiful rose that still continued to come each morning, and carefully, and, indeed, wistfully, as she scanned the hurrying or lingering faces of men, from none of them did she gain a hint of him who each morning sent her that beautiful rose.

So, as time went on, she began to create in her own fancy the unknown man who each morning sent to her the symbol of an admiration that asked nothing in return. Of course, he was young, and strong, and handsome—but it was strange that he should never care to reveal himself. What could be the mysterious reason for that?

Something very like love for her invisible admirer began to grow up in her heart; and, as the roses continued to come each morning, she watched more and more wistfully for the face that thus kept itself hidden; and the faces that she saw grew to be less and less real to her, and the face she dreamed of to become the only reality.

During this time there were men whose devotion to her was manly and honorable, men who asked her hand in marriage, and who could think of nothing more wonderful than to frame her beauty in a fair home, and no joy comparable to the joy of working for her happiness. But always she shook her golden head; for by this time her heart had been given to him who still each morning sent her that single rose, and whose name it seemed she was never to know.

At length, after many months had gone by, there came a morning when the little, looked-for packet was missing from her desk. On the day after, it was the same, and a whole week went by, yet her rose was missing. Other foolish, beribboned flowers came, as usual, but she looked in vain for her single rose.

One morning, at last, she knew the reason, and her beautiful young head lay on her desk, as her shoulders shook with sobs, and her tears fell over a let-

ter that had come to her, instead of her rose. Careless of the curious eyes that glanced at her, as men and women passed in and out along the hotel corridor, she cried to herself as if her heart would break. For the man who had sent her that rose each morning was dead.

Here are some of the words that were already blurred with her tears:

I am writing what I have loved you too well to say to your lovely and forever sacred face, and what you could not have borne to listen to from my lips; and I write now because, when you receive this letter, you cannot misunderstand why I write it. To have told you of my love while I was alive might well have seemed an insult. Now, I hope it will at least not seem that.

Perhaps I ought to have been content to have worshiped your beauty, to have revered the purity of spirit I saw behind it, to have understood the courage and goodness of your heart—in silence. Instead, I have sent you each morning since I first saw you, and shall send till I can send it no more—a rose.

If you have wondered at all who sent it, I am rewarded enough. I meant it to come to you simply as the song of a bird might come—to make you happy; and perhaps, too, selfishly to hint to you that there was some one in the world who loved you, but knew himself too well to ask anything in return, but to go on loving you in silence—and as from behind a mask.

Your face has been my altar all these days. To it I have brought all I dared bring to it—a rose.

Had I dared, no words, nor all the music in heaven, can express the happiness to me of telling you my love, and asking you to share my home and my life—as happier men could do. Yet for such as I, was it not enough to look—yet hardly dare to look—a few moments each day into your eyes, as men gaze into some innocent spring; to be near your fragrance a while, as men stand and dream by a lilac bush in May, and wonder at the sweetness of the world and the goodness of God?

Yes, that was enough, and for all this, dear girl, I thank you; and, when the time comes for this letter to reach you, I shall rest content, remembering—as I must still remember in my grave—your beautiful face; remembering all the dewlike purity and wonder that is you.

The signature to the letter, that of one of the most famous financiers in New York, told her all.

At last she knew who it had been who had loved her in that strange way

—knew, too, in a flash, why he had never told of his love. How could she have guessed—she, whom that morning rose had set dreaming of a tall and handsome youth—that he who had thus loved her in silence all the time had been the strange little twisted creature, with the gentle manners, but with the face like some foolish mask, who had come nearly every day to ask her to take down his letters about steel and stocks, and who would certainly set no one thinking of roses?

He was one of the richest and saddest men in New York. Though for those who knew and loved him his grotesque ugliness was lit up by the interior charm of a noble and tender nature, yet he could never forget that he was what he called himself, "the homeliest man in the world." So conscious was he of his own ugliness that he had never dreamed of marrying, and his sensitiveness and a sad sense of humor had put the idea of his seeking the love of a woman forever from his thoughts.

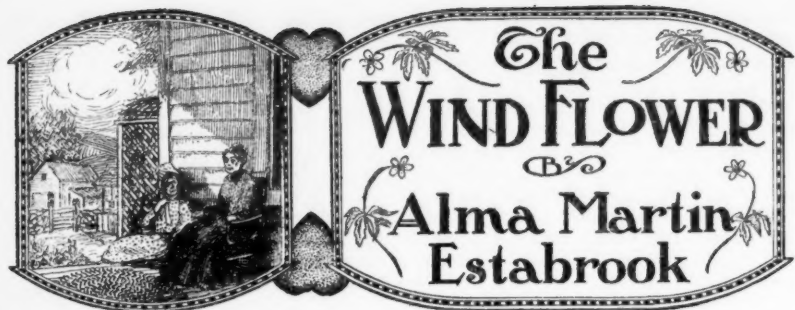
But the beauty of the young typewriter had charmed and touched him, and the fancy had come to him that, though love for him was not to be thought of for all his wealth, he might still, without harming her, offer her the silent devotion of that morning rose. And, having foreknowledge, also, that his life was not to be long, he had left to her an inheritance sufficient to save her from sitting in that hotel foyer any longer, to save her from the beribboned bouquets that insulted her purity, and

to take her old father and mother to the sunlit southern sea.

"The homeliest man in the world" was buried with that ceremony and concourse of distinguished mourners from which no rich man, however simple his heart in life, can quite escape in death. His coffin was hidden under immense wreaths and bouquets of flowers, festooned with ribbons in professional loops about their stems. The great florists' shops of New York were almost depleted of flowers the morning he was laid in his great marble vault. And, strange to say, most of the flowers were sincere; for many had loved the queer, twisted little man, who had not dared to offer his love to any one; and after he had been left to his peace, well-paid sextons took care that the due flowers of spring and autumn blossomed about his well-kept grave.

To these ministrations I am certain that the dead man pays no heed; but if the dust that has loved, and is still loved, can dream in the darkness, can still hear the footsteps of those that never forget—of this, too, I am certain: that "the homeliest man in the world" is not unaware of the single rose that comes every morning to his grave, as long ago there used to come to the desk of the face that he loved a single rose. And, as she had cared nothing for all the other flowers, so he cares only for that single rose that comes to him every morning, and will come so long as the girl who can never cease to love him shall live to send it.





A WIND as sweet as honey stirred the cornfield, and set it to crooning. The green slopes of the comradely hills about it were wrapped in gauzes of purple and saffron, and a light that was like a shred of faded sunset or a tatter torn from some old rainbow rested over the thick ivy of a farmhouse at the field's edge.

Within the trellised porch, where the air hung heavy with the breath of evening, two very old women who had not seen each other for many years sat together, living in retrospect, not this later period of separation, but the long-past time of their youth. Briefly the words fell from their loosened old lips—much babble would have vexed them equally. Yet in little else were they alike, these two whom fate had jostled at the prelude of their morning, and whom chance had brought briefly together at life's end.

"So ye hold no grudge, Nannie, seen' that time has borne me out?" one asked, sitting deep in an old hickory chair, to whose stiff angles her heavily fleshed body had long since accustomed itself—a chair to which, as to a refuge, she came habitually at the close of her serene, laborious days.

A contented, gray-toned, slow-handed woman she was, still of astonishing practical vigor. Her rugged face, with its small, satisfied eyes, and its grimly jutting chin, had been seamed by time alone. No ferments of the blood had tormented her. Restlessness and long-

ing and vague dissatisfaction had left her unvexed. The ancient business of tending the cradle and the hearth had wholly occupied her.

As she spoke she stretched her feet forth casefully beneath the hem of her crisp gingham gown, put up a work-twisted hand to a loosened wave of still-heavy hair, and sighed tentatively, conscious of the pleasant sensuousness of the life about her.

The twilight, meshed and thickened by the vines of the porch, held in curious contrast the two faces. That of the visitor seemed to yearn out of it lustroously. Yet she, too, was faded—more faded, indeed, than the other, since there had been so much more in her to fade—the high flame of beauty and passion, and the magic of a vivid individuality.

She made no reply to the question. But her expressive gesture said: "What does it matter now?" And her eyes added: "You thought you were right."

Old Caroline Butterfield answered the eyes. "Aye, I *knew* I was right!" she said out of her cool serenity; and her glance left the cornfield and the willows and the river, and passed to tender distances where other fields stretched in gratifying repleteness. It compassed the sleek cattle in the lush meadows, the sheep on the gentle slopes, the small buff houses of the farm hands, and the great rambling barns. It seemed to gather up the whole scene of plenty, and, holding it

possessively, to offer it thus as proof indubitable of the wisdom of a decision made more than half a century before.

"Ye had too much youth in ye, Nannie, though by actual years ye were no younger than me. Mebbe 'twas just that ye was different. The old uns of the village used to say when ye visited over there"—with a nod toward a red roof across an orchard's green and yellow length—"that 'twas no hearth woman had borne ye."

Her guest was leaning forward, watching a moth in its bewildered endeavor to reach the low lamplight behind one of the vine-covered windows.

"As fer Dick," went on Caroline Butterfield, in her considering tones, "his name fer ye was 'the Little Wind Flower.' Because ye was so white and fairy springin', and loved the wind so, he said, and was always dancin' in it. Did ye know, I wonder, that he called ye that?"

"Yes," she said indescribably, "I knew."

A silence fell between them, while the corn blades sang together beneath the breeze, and a solitary cricket poured his chirping monotone into the dusk.

"Willy Brandon—ye mind him, don't ye?—used to say that in yer heart ye was kin to the Minstrel People. It was before Willy went into the ministry, but he was always gentle in his judgments, ye recollect."

With unconscious frankness, without malice or acrimony, she spoke, in a voice as impersonal and as uncharged with emotion as if they continued to discuss their acquaintances of the countryside, and those who now slept beyond the hill. And she who listened listened also with a strange aloofness, laying her chin upon her shriveled palm and dreaming, while beyond the trellis the twilight deepened, and innumerable sparrow families twittered sleepy good nights to each other in the ivy.

"What do the Minstrel Folks, as ye call 'em, know about life, fer all their singin' and dancin' and merrymakin'?" I asked Willy; and I mind the way he looked at me before he said: "Some-

times I think they know more about *everything* than the rest of us, Caroline."

"Yes? Go on," urged the other woman, as the dry old voice ceased.

"If I do, it must be in my own way, but ye don't care fer mealy-mouthedness yerself, I'm thinkin', so I'll speak plain English. When Willy said that to me, I told him ye had bewitched him. 'She's got a gypsy heart in her,' I said. 'She'll bring peace to no man.' And he answered, speakin' more to hisself than to me: 'Mebbe not. But ah, the far country she'll lead him to!'"

"Did he say that?" whispered the voice from the shadows.

"Aye; and I told him no man could want a better country than this country right here. And he went away. Then Dick come, askin' me to free him from his promise to me that he might marry you."

For an instant the narration ceased—an instant in which the one woman continued to yield her body in comfort to the angles of her chair, while the other seemed to gather herself tensely together, waiting.

"Ye mind the old way of Dick, hot and wild—a way like yer own it was in them days," the impersonal tones went on; and now she spoke even more deliberately, through no reluctance, but rather from a grim desire for accuracy. "Well, that night he come hurryin' up out of the dark to where mother and me was sittin' in the doorway of the old house that used to stand where this house stands now. My father had died the year before, and left the farm to me—a mere forty acres it was then, with nothin' on it but the house and one barn.

"We were sittin' there together, mother and me. She was as old as we be now, and blind—stone blind. She threw up her head when she heard his steps, and said: 'Dick! Somethin's happened!' And he come plugin' up the path as white as he was that day two years ago when he lay dead there in the house, and he went straight at what he had to say.

"He'd found out, he told me, that it was a mistake—our bein' engaged to marry. He loved you, he said; he'd love ye as long as he lived, and when he was dead he thought he'd go on lovin' ye still!

"He threw it at me, quick and sorry, humble and proud; and then he tramped up and down the gravel before the door, and I mind me yet the crunchin' of his heels, and the way my mother tried to fix me with her eyes that couldn't see, while all the crickets in the world seemed chirpin', steady and solemn, like that cricket's doin' now."

She paused to push away with the toe of her flat shoe a great, sleepy cat which her chair endangered.

"Ye know well enough what happened," she said matter-of-factly, as she straightened. "I stood my ground. I wouldn't give him up. He went thrashin' off into the night at last, and mother said, her voice shakin' and awedlike: 'I don't know where ye get yer courage.' And I turned on her, furious that she didn't understand, she that should have.

"'It ain't courage,' I said; 'it's foresight. I know what's best fer us all. The kind of a wife he needs ain't one with a head full of dreams and wings fer heels. It's one that'll make him a home, and work in the fields 'longside him, if need be, and bear him strong, steady-goin' children. It's one that's free of giddy woman fancies. One without splurge and claptrap splash. Oh, Nannie's got all I ain't got—looks and a way with her; but she's like the puny flower he calls her. And poor men ain't got no real use fer flowers. They can't afford 'em. If he married her, and took her to his little house, it'd be like buyin' a hothouse blossom and puttin' it in a tin can.' And that's what it would have been like, Nannie."

With untroubled surety, her glance sought the other woman's face; and the other's eyes, full of reverie, met her eyes absently.

"Then Dick sent Willy Brandon to plead fer him," old Caroline Butterfield continued. "'Ye must give him up,' Willy said. 'Ye mustn't make a mis-

take. It's love he has fer her—pure, undyin' passion.'

"'Which is pure nonsense!' said I. 'What account does it take of the plain, practical side of life? And that's the side ye have to deal with, gloves off. Knowin' the stars and the clouds and the flowers ain't knowin' what a woman needs to know, and that's how to bake and mend and tend her house and children. So, seein' as I know that, and she don't, I'll hold him to me, and the day'll come when ye'll see I was right.'"

The visitor did not speak. She looked more and more, as her small figure merged into the gathering dusk, like a little gray ghost that had come gliding across the ashes of a day that was long dead.

"'Ye live in different worlds, I'm afraid, Caroline,' he said, lookin' at me with that straight, deep-seein' look of his; and I answered, hotlike, that 'twas so. 'But the world I live in is the everyday world around us,' I said. 'Them that sleeps in beds, and eats from tables, and clothes their bodies decent lives in it. It's the world where ye have to earn yer bread, Dick has got his to earn. And I'll hold to the right to help him earn it. So we'll talk no more about it.'"

Silence fell again. All the things beyond the doorway, the trees and vines and bushes, seemed tangled with the shadows of the dusk. The great, sleepy cat aroused itself to leap to the snigger haven of its mistress' lap, where it curled beneath her seared hands.

"'Twas all that was said between us for fifty years. Then 'twas at our golden-weddin' anniversary, when the whole countryside had come to do Dick and me honor. The children was here, and the grandchildren, and the great-grandchildren, the friends, and them that was no more than acquaintances; and Willy Brandon had come, too, from the little white parsonage where he's lived alone, poor fellow, ever since his wife died when she was just a girl. And as we stood side by side on the porch after dinner, lookin' out over the

place"—again the assembling, proof-proffering glance went into the twilight, seeing all the objects of its possession as plainly as if a noontime sun were in the sky—"I said: 'Ye'll have to admit I was right, Willy.'"

"And he understood what I meant, and fer a minute he was still, the wind blowin' his white hair across his eyes as he stared off to where Dick was playin' with the great-grandchildren. Then he said—and I give him credit fer bein' honest with hisself and fair to me: 'Ye've given him all ye had to give.'"

She stroked her cat. A smile that was like the smile of the earth when autumn touches it with calm repose—a smile of seeds sown and harvests ripened and garnered—lay over her face.

"To know what ye're about is a great thing," she sighed tranquilly; "a very great thing. And ye've had yer full life, too, Nannie. We've heard what a great man yer husband was, and how rich. When yer last granddaughter had her comin'-out party, and ye danced at it, there was a picture of ye in the village paper. Did ye know?"

"Yes, I knew. Willy Brandon sent it to me."

"Did he, though? That was like Willy. He wanted ye to see ye was still remembered here, I s'pose. I pointed the picture out to Dick—it was just a few months before Willy found him sittin' dead under one of the trees in the orchard. 'Still dancin'.' I said, without any malice; and he smiled, and answered somethin' about wind flowers always dancin'. That was the only time yer name had ever passed between us since the night he asked me to give him up."

The visitor arose, and drew her wrap about her. A drift of sudden moonlight fell through the ivy. "Good-by," she said. "To-morrow I shall be gone, and it isn't probable we'll ever see each other again."

"And ye bear no grudge?"

"Grudge!" Their old hands met and clung. Many emotions were in the other woman's face—the quiet memory of old pain, the relief of recent easement, and something so much more that it relit the burned-out eyes until they starred her face as the marigold stars a marsh when the sun shines out on a cloud-swept morning. "We are too old to bear malice," she said, her voice catching on a broken note. "I understand it all so well, Caroline. Besides, you never took anything that belonged to me."

She went down the steps and along the light-drenched way. At a lift in the path she stopped and looked out on the plentitude that the night but half concealed—the land of old Caroline Butterfield's possession.

A smile too deep for the lips lay in her eyes. Her fingers trembled at the clasp of the bag on her wrist, and brought forth the picture Willy Brandon had sent her. Pinned to it, the stain of their bruised petals spotting the paper, was a spray of wind flowers.

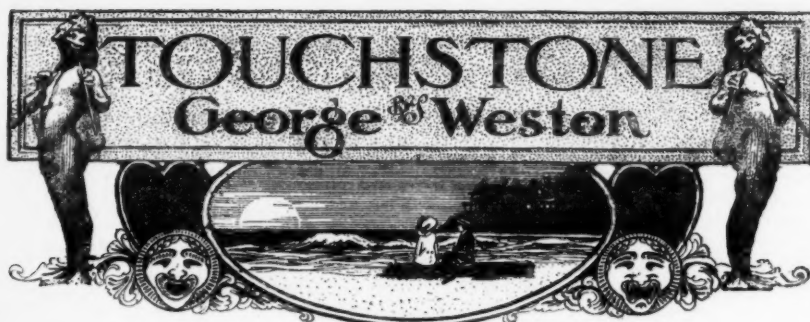
She lifted them to her lips—withered lips they were for kissing—and read again what the old minister had written, although never by so faint a light could her dim eyes have performed the task had not the words been bigger, bolder, more triumphant upon her heart than upon the paper:

... The picture and the flowers were in his hand when I found him that morning in the orchard. You see, you whom he never saw again after you left him were with him then, as you were with him always for more than fifty years.

And because I, too, have known his utter, unceasing loneliness, I send them to you, to whom they belong. . . .

She stood for a moment, outlined in the moonlight, the wind eddying softly about her. A little gray ghost she looked, indeed—a ghost with grave lips and luminous eyes.

"Nothing that belonged to me," she whispered thrillingly.



AT the edge of the woods Ashmore turned and looked back at the gay lawns and terraces of The Gables. Diane was watching him from the veranda, but he did not see her. And yet his thoughts were curiously centered around Diane.

"Dear Diane!" he murmured. "If I were not so old, Diane—and if I were not a failure, Diane! But I am thirty-three, and a failure, my dear, and that is a very sad thing."

With a whimsical shrug, he turned his back on the scene, and entered the woods. "And I, too, am a very sad thing," he said to the trees. "So cast your shadows upon me, and wave your branches sadly to the sky, and we will all be sad together, my mournful and beautiful trees."

And mournfully he smiled at his fancies until a grasshopper seemed to answer him from the silence of the woods. Ashmore stood still and listened.

"But wait a moment, Mr. Grasshopper," he said, interrupting with a wave of his hand. "You do not understand the case, or I am sure you would not answer me so cheerfully. I am a dramatist—Perry Ashmore, the dramatist; the man who was accused two years ago of writing the most wonderful play of the age, who was hailed on every hand as a world genius and a master—and who has written nothing but failures since—the most horrible, heart-rending, and melancholy failures that have ever been penned by mortal

fingers." He woefully shook his head. "And now I challenge you to chirp if you can, Mr. Grasshopper, for at last you know the manner of man who is walking through your woods."

Because of some vagary of circumstance, the grasshopper ceased its song. "You see?" said Ashmore, as if calling the trees to bear witness. And sadly he walked along the path until he came to an ant that was struggling with a heavy burden.

"Oh, Mr. Ant!" he said, bending over and drawing a circle around it with his stick. "A cricket would have a word with you, if you please." The ant dropped its load, and hurried toward an ant hill at the side of the path. "Very well," said Ashmore gravely; "I will address the colony."

He waited until the ant had disappeared into its retreat, and then he leaned over and made a graceful gesture of entreaty. "My friends," he said, "I am a cricket who sang in the spring. And now I find that I cannot sing any more, and I have never learned to work. So what shall I do, my busy little friends, and what do you think of my conduct?"

He waited for a time, and then ruefully arose. "It is the silence of contempt," he said; "and as soon as my back is turned they will call me a fool." And sadly he arose, and sadly he quoted:

"And out of the wicket
Then went the poor cricket——"

A butterfly danced through the air

before him. "Is that you, Gabrielle?" he gently cried. "I may try to catch you to-morrow, Gabrielle, but not to-day—because of Diane." And, "Dear Diane!" he murmured again. But his eyes were on the butterfly, and rather wistfully he followed it until it had flickered out of sight.

He was silent then, and in silence he advanced through the woods until he reached the cliff that overlooked the sea. "That's right," he said, when the noise of the surf came to his ears; "I like to hear you sigh, for sighing is a sound that pleasantly suits my mood."

He stood still and listened, even as he had listened in the woods. "Ah, never before was I sighed for on such a generous scale," he said; and he looked at the sea with a glance of approval. "Are you sorry for me?" he asked. "And will you give me an inspiration now that will make my name immortal?"

He folded his arm, and caressed his mustache. "I am here," he presently announced. Again: "I am ready and waiting." And, speaking at last in those metrical measures that he sometimes liked to use, he added:

"But his heart was a shell,
And in this shell of a heart
Sighed the sadness of ocean
And found a sounding void——"

A sea gull soared from the water and hung suspended between the waves and the sky. "That is twice within the last five minutes that I have thought of Gabrielle," mused Ashmore. He looked at the sky. "And that's three times," he said; and mournfully he laughed.

"What a fool Gabrielle must think I am because of my failures," he reflected. "And I might have succeeded if——"

And for a long time he looked over the sea.

"But then there's Diane," he said. "And if I succeed with Gabrielle, I must lose with Diane. And yet, Diane, I am getting old, my dear; and I am a failure, my dear; and a man has pride, my dear Diane; and a middle-aged failure is not the man I would like to see you marry."

Again he stared at the sea.

"And success is sweet," he told himself. He saw again his audiences as they watched his play, "The Hill," their faces uplifted and breathless, their eyes alight with exalted tenderness. "And to think that it was I who moved them so. I, Ashmore, the failure. And so I could move them again if—— But not as it is—but not as it is," he sighed.

He stooped to pick a flower that was growing in the shelter of a stone. "And so, you see, Diane," he said, and gently he placed the flower in his buttonhole. "But not as it is——" he breathed.

For Ashmore had begun to feel that it was useless to try again until he had lightened himself of that unknown load that was holding him down to earth. "And it's a sad thing to be a failure," he murmured to the flower in his buttonhole. "They say, 'What's the matter with Ashmore?' And they answer, 'Oh, he's a fizzle—a failure.' And that isn't pleasant, you know, Diane, when a man has pride."

A summerhouse had been built on the highest point of the cliff, and he made his way toward it.

"What a stage!" he thought, looking at the sea, the sky, the cliff, and the encircling background of trees. "And to think that I cannot conceive a situation that might be played upon it! The waves are the audience, and the surf is the orchestra. And the audience grows restless, and the orchestra plays unceasingly, but I can give them nothing—there is nothing I can give them."

His glance, grown careworn and old, swept the plateau behind him. "No, never since the world began has there been such a stage—but perhaps a failure like mine requires a large setting." He looked at the line of trees from which he had just emerged, and he thought he caught a flash of color in the shadows. The next moment the figure of a girl came into sight.

"Ah-ha!" murmured Ashmore. "Enter—a young lady."

The girl drew nearer, and he turned to the waves below.

"Diane!" he gravely announced.

She approached the summerhouse with the simple directness that was characteristic of her, and settled herself in one of the wicker chairs.

"Have I surprised you?" she asked.

"Agreeably so," he told her. "I thought you were going to play tennis this afternoon."

"I thought so, too. And then I thought I would come and talk to you instead."

She seemed to be in no hurry to begin, though, but looked thoughtfully out over the waves. She wore a red-and-white blazer, and, his glance upon the horizon, Ashmore was thinking how well it brought out the pink-and-white tints of her beauty. "You see what a heroine has appeared upon the scene?" he silently asked his audience. "And now do you begin to understand?"

"Aren't some things hard to begin?" said Diane, her chin on her hand.

"Beginnings and endings are always the hardest parts."

"I haven't come to many endings yet," she said, her blue eyes on the water; "but I've had to begin a number of things, and some of them weren't very easy."

He was sure then that she had come to comfort him, and to tell him of her sympathy. She had often told him this with her expression, her manner, the tone of her voice; but never yet had she spoken it outright. "Those chatter-boxes at the house have got on her nerves," he thought; "and now she is going to have it out with me."

"Perry," she said, with her simple directness, "what do you suppose is the matter?"

"You mean with me?"

"Oh, with everything! You are the same as you always were, and it must be something else that's different. What do you suppose it is?"

The relationship between them was a delicate one, for Diane knew that Ashmore loved her, and she knew that his failure was all that was keeping him from telling her so. And this delicate relationship was made more difficult for two reasons—Diane loved Ashmore,

and there were times when she found it hard to hide it from him.

"I was thinking of the same thing a little while ago," he said; "and once this afternoon I thought a butterfly had told me; but I am not quite sure."

"What did the butterfly say?"

"I didn't follow it to ask."

She was accustomed to his fanciful play of ideas, and she liked to look for the latent thoughts behind his fancies. But this time she showed a clairvoyance that caused him to look at her in sudden wonder.

"Perry," she said, "who is 'G. M.'? I was reading 'The Hill' again yesterday, and I noticed that it was dedicated to 'G. M.' Who is it, Perry? Any one that I know?"

"Oh, you candid child!" he said. And smiling and sighing together, he made a gesture to the troubled waves below. "You hear my wonderful heroine?" he asked aloud. "And is she not remarkable and free from fear?"

In Diane's profile and the even glances of her eyes there was something serene and queenly. Not even her years, not even the fresh texture of her beauty, could altogether conceal it. But never before had Ashmore seen her look at him with such a glance of innocent stateliness as she looked at him then.

"No, don't let's put it off," she said. "You know you are miserable, and you know you can't hide it any longer." She looked at the shadows beneath his eyes, and her heart moved for him in his trouble. "Is it any one that I know?" she asked again.

"No, Diane, you don't know her."

She waited until she knew that her voice would be quite steady. She had guessed that a woman's identity might be concealed behind the initials, but she had not been sure until then.

"And did she help you with 'The Hill,' Perry? And did you get your inspiration from her, do you think?"

"Yes, I think she helped me a lot."

Diane's head was proudly raised.

"And have you seen her—since?"

"No, I have never seen her—since."

The fire of jealousy flared in Diane's

heart, and burned, a blue flame, in her eyes. But again she saw the shadows on Ashmore's face, and her heart went out to him more tenderly than ever. "And he has never seen her since he met me," she thought.

Her mind went back to the magnificent success of "The Hill," the interviews, the cables, the praise that had attended it, and the lines came to her memory: "My genius is a golden glow, which only you can light."

"And I cannot light it!" thought Diane. "And I cannot light it!"

She looked at Ashmore attentively, almost fiercely, as if by the intensity of her love she would fan the golden glow into a new and more splendid effulgence. And then a feeling of futility and compassion enveloped her. "He has never seen her since he met me," she thought; "and if I love him I will help him all I can."

Ashmore had arisen, and was holding out his hand to help her up. "The Gables will be disconsolate," he said.

"No," she said, and she waved his hand aside. "Tell me more about 'G. M.' Who is she?"

"There's no particular mystery about it, Diane. It's Gabrielle Minot."

"The contralto?"

"Yes."

Her next question halted a little, as if fearful of its own boldness: "And why haven't you seen her since your first play, Perry?" she gently asked.

"There are a number of reasons—but listen carefully, Diane: None of these reasons reflects upon Mademoiselle Minot."

"Did you have a misunderstanding of some sort?"

"One could hardly call it that. She has been singing abroad these last two years, and I haven't seen her."

"Is she—pretty—off the stage?"

"Yes, she is pretty off the stage, O thou daughter of Eve!"

"And—fascinating?"

"Very fascinating. And now—if you don't take pity on The Gables——" He held out his hand again, and she arose from the low chair, and tucked her hand under his arm.

"Do you know what I would do if I were you, Perry?" They had entered the woods. The sun was setting, and an opalescent light was filtering through the leaves.

"No," he said; "tell me."

Diane's hand pressed more heavily upon his arm. "I would see Mademoiselle Minot again. She sings in New York this year, and she may be here already."

"My dear Diane!"

"Because you know, Perry," she said, though her voice trembled, "you can't go on the way you are; and if she makes any difference to your success—and your happiness——"

He stopped, and Diane faced him. She was standing in a greenly golden shaft of light, her head held high, her eyes looking into his.

"And I, too, must be brave," thought Ashmore; "as brave as this, my heroine. And if a failure cannot marry her, and yet may marry another, at least my heroine shall know the reason why." But his words came with an effort.

"Listen, Diane," he said. "One reason why I haven't seen mademoiselle again is because I have not cared to increase my obligations to her. Obligations must be met, you know, and there are some obligations that can be met in only one way."

She looked at him, and saw Ashmore, the failure. And then she remembered him successful, triumphant, whimsically proud of the plaudits with which the world had hailed "The Hill." "And what is keeping him back?" she asked. "It is I—Diane; it is I, and no one else." The greenly gold shaft of light shone on her like an aureole.

"Perry," she said, "I would see Mademoiselle Minot again if I were you."

He shook his head.

"Yes, and you shall, too!" she exclaimed, speaking as one would speak to an obdurate child.

"My dear Diane!" he breathed.

She bent her head, and silently raised her hand to his arm.

"My dear, my dear Diane!"

Arrived at the house, Diane left Ashmore on the piazza, and entered the library. After she had consulted the newspapers there she went in search of her uncle. Staniland was in his study, agreeably engaged in the task of signing checks.

"May I come in?" asked Diane.

Staniland looked over his shoulder—a massive shoulder, and a massive face.

"In trouble?" he asked. "Come in and tell your Uncle Jim about it."

He went on signing his checks with a mechanical manipulation of the pen and blotter, and Diane sat down by the side of his desk. "What makes you think I'm in trouble?" she laughed.

He turned over a page of the check book. "Because that's the way your aunt used to speak," he said. "And then she would come in, and shut the door, and sit down there at the side of the desk—in that very same chair—and try to laugh. Ah, Diane, you can't fool your Uncle Jim!"

Her arm went curving around his shoulder, and she pressed her face against his gnarled old cheek. "I want to talk to you about Perry Ashmore," she said. "You saw his first play, didn't you?"

"Saw it and read it both."

"And what did you think of it?"

"I would rather have written such a play than own The Gables."

"And why do you think his others have been such failures?"

"I give it up, my dear. They were talking about it this afternoon when he was out— Oh, Ashmore himself wouldn't have minded if he had heard them. And they all gave it up."

"I heard them start talking about it, but what did they say after I left?"

"Some of them wondered whether the first play was a flash in the pan—an accident. But Massey said that a word or a phrase might be described as a flash in the pan, but that a play was too much of a sustained effort."

"What else did they say?"

"That's it. They didn't know what to say. He has shown that he can do wonders, and there apparently he stops.

Some day he may go on, and do more wonders—and perhaps he never will."

Diane's eyes were bright, and very evenly she looked at Staniland. "Uncle Jim—what would you say if I suggested something that would cost a lot of money?"

"I would write another check. How much do you want?"

"No, no, I don't want any money. But I wondered if you would like to give a musicale here some night. The singers are returning from abroad, and what's the use of having that beautiful music room if you never have any beautiful music in it?"

"And what has this to do with Ashmore? You said you wanted to talk about Ashmore."

He would have turned on the electric light, but she stopped him. "No; let's sit in the twilight, may we?" she said. "It's so peaceful and calm." The sunset had gone, and shadows were filling the room. "Oh, yes, about Perry. I had a curious thought that perhaps music might—might have a good effect upon him."

Staniland laid his pen down at that. "That's an enormously long shot," he said, leaning back in his chair.

"I know it is. But I think he has tried everything that sounds reasonable—and perhaps now if he tried something else—Uncle Jim, haven't you noticed the way he looks lately?"

"Diane," said her uncle, "this is a strong chair, with a wide arm. Come over here and tell me all about it."

She went to his side, and again her arm went curving around his shoulder, and again her face was pressed against his cheek. "There isn't much to tell," she whispered, "except that I want to help him—"

"And why do you want to help him?"

"Because—I like to help people, I think."

Staniland looked at her, and gently patted her shoulder.

"So I got this idea about the music," she said. "I know it sounds absurd, but I would like to try it—if you don't mind." He reached for the telephone book. "Can we have it to-morrow

night, Uncle Jim?" she asked. "He's going away the day after to-morrow, you know."

"We'll arrange it right now," said Staniland, opening the telephone book. "I'll call up those amusement agents in New York who sent us the last lot of—"

"This will cost a dreadful lot of money, I'm afraid, because I want a very expensive singer—Mademoiselle Minot. She sings at a concert in New York to-night, so it won't be much trouble for the agency people to find her."

The master of The Gables lifted the telephone receiver from its hook, and called for New York. "All right," he said over his shoulder. "If there's any way of getting her, I'll get her."

She moved uncertainly toward the door.

"And if you can get a violin and harp—"

"A violin and harp. Anything else?"

Diane was standing near the door, scarcely discernible in the fast-gathering gloom.

"And if you could get a tenor, Uncle Jim, and have him bring the score of the 'Miserere.'"

She opened the door without noise, and walked toward the stairs. And up the stairs and along to her room she slowly walked to the accompaniment of that most plaintive of sighs:

Ah, I have sighed to rest me—

"You will wear your green and silver, Miss Diane?" asked the maid. "It came this afternoon."

"No, Jane; I am going to wear all white to-night."

And still, without ceasing, she seemed to hear that beautiful lamentation:

Out of the love I bear thee—

And along the hall and down the stairs it followed her, and in her ears it gathered in mournful volume after she had met Staniland in the hall below.

"It's all right," he had told her. "The agency people have just called me up

to tell me that Mademoiselle Minot will be here for to-morrow night."

Mademoiselle Minot was at The Gables.

With her maid, her Pom, her accompanist, and a wardrobe trunk, she had reached The Gables at five o'clock, and had retired at once to her room. Tassoni, the tenor, red-lipped and smiling, had also arrived, together with a number of musicians and their instruments.

Ashmore was off in the woods somewhere.

At half past five mademoiselle sent down word that she would prefer to dine in her room. She had a headache, she said, and the quiet of her apartment was all that was necessary to relieve it. In this way, events conspired to make her meeting with Ashmore a rather dramatic affair.

Although the season was far advanced, the night was balmy, and the sky was full of stars. Ashmore was smoking an after-dinner cigarette on the veranda, and lazily arguing with Nina Forrest regarding the comparative merits of Lucerne and Vevey, when he heard Gabrielle's voice drawing nearer. He looked around, his heart quickening its beat, and simply found himself looking up into the eyes of mademoiselle. Presently Diane, placing her arm around Nina Forrest, left them together.

"Well," murmured mademoiselle, "if this is not too surprising for words, please tell me what is!"

Her gown was a dark shade of red silk, covered with black lace, and Ashmore noticed that her lips and the rose in her hair were the same shade of red. In her gestures, her attitudes, her features, he saw again that delicate vivacity that had first attracted him to her.

She wore her hair low upon her forehead, as if to accentuate the upward turn of her nose, and to add emphasis to her glances. But it was, perhaps, the perfection of her grace that contributed most to the undeniable effect that Mademoiselle Minot produced wherever she appeared. In the turn and poise of her head, the movements

of her hands and shoulders, the indefinable sway of her walk, one recognized a superlative and finished elegance, as ultimate in its way as a *panel* by Watteau or a Chopin waltz. When she came on a scene every one else became clumsy; and when she went off it was as if something astonishingly consummate had vanished with her.

"And where have you been these last two years?" she asked. "And why have I not heard from you for so long?"

"I've been busy—Gabrielle." He had not meant to say her name, but his remark by itself savored too much of rudeness, and he added her name to soften the phrase.

Her next remark seemed at first to be offered to help him: "But at least we meet again." And she closed that phase of the subject with a movement of her fan, as if the interval had been canceled from remembrance—had never existed—but her mind was very busy with Ashmore's unexpected appearance. "Has he arranged it?" she asked.

She had grown into the habit of regarding herself as responsible for the success of "The Hill." Had not Ashmore himself, in the flush of his success, told her so? She had followed his subsequent efforts, and, with the occurrence of each failure, she had felt an unalloyed and increasing sense of satisfaction. "Without me, he is nothing," she had thought; "and when he is sure of that he will return. Very well. I can wait."

And here unexpectedly she had met him again. "Has he arranged it?" she asked; and she answered herself that he had. "It is my turn now!"

Her thoughts became triumphant, and her eyes narrowed as she watched him. The music of the violin and harp came to them through the open window, and Ashmore turned in his chair.

"You have come to—"

"To sing," she nodded. "But first we will let them play for a while." She held him with the smile of her eyes. "Shall we?" she asked. And, without waiting for him to answer: "Tell me what you have been doing these long

two years. You say you have been busy."

"I have been busy making failures," he said; and he stared at the stars. The notes of a cello were melting into the melody of the violin and harp, and Ashmore became conscious of the faint perfume that Gabrielle had always made a part of her identity. The cello played a mournful air, and the violin quivered as if in an ecstasy of apprehension. The stars looked down upon them; a breeze from the south rustled the leaves on the trees.

"In the violin is the soul of a woman," thought Ashmore; "and the cello hides the heart of a man." Again the mournful notes of the cello came to his ear. "And he is afraid—he is afraid," he thought.

Gabrielle, her head resting on the back of her chair, her face turned toward him, hummed a low accompaniment.

"Are you here for long, Perry?" she asked.

"I am going in the morning."

"So am I." She continued her humming. "And what shall I sing you to-night? I know! I have a new English song, and last summer when I sang it in London the queen gave me this bracelet." She lightly touched the bracelet on her arm.

Engrossed with his ideas, he scarcely heard her. "And Diane has done this," he was thinking. Then like a flash the inspiration came to him. "A tragedy! A man with a tortured ambition that can work only with the help of a Gabrielle; and a great-souled woman who loves him and gives him up to Gabrielle in order to make him happy!"

Again the notes of the violin came to him, high drawn and trembling. "My dear, my dear Diane!" thought Ashmore. And, hearing then the deeper, more mournful notes of the cello: "And he is afraid—afraid!"

His mood grew sômer, but a sense of confidence gradually began to take possession of him—that same confidence in which he had written "The Hill." Tableaux and situations presented themselves to his mind. But un-

der all his perceptions ran an undercurrent of irony at the trick that his genius was playing upon him. "It may be that I have laughed at life too much," he thought; "and this is life's revenge. I wait two years for a theme, and it comes—as came the first—with Gabrielle."

She was humming again, triumphant, contemplative, her head on the back of her chair, her eyes upon him; and it seemed to Ashmore as if she were a magical and beautiful spider weaving a spell around him. "But I never thought I would regard myself as a fly," he ruefully smiled.

At the other end of the veranda he saw Diane with young Shallcross. "And a nice boy, though a fool, and her own age, too," he thought. "And if he wore the cap and bells he would not be so great a fool as I—Ashmore, the dramatist—who began by giving reality to unreal things, and ends by losing his grasp on those that are real."

The melancholy notes of the cello arose in their power. "That's right—wail!" thought Ashmore. The noise of the surf came to him through the trees. "And that's right—sigh!" he thought. But when the quiver of the violin came trembling into his consciousness, "My dear Diane!" he thought; and his mood dissolved into tenderness.

Gabrielle was speaking to him. "It seems so natural to be with you again, Perry," she was saying. "I was going to Washington to-morrow to attend a dinner to the French ambassador, but now I'll give it up, and we'll dine in town together, and talk about your plans. You are writing another play?"

"I shall start it to-morrow."

Staniland joined them, and for a minute or two he talked with mademoiselle. Ashmore noted her old manner of giving to others the same smile and the same glances that she gave to him. "How well she can play us!" he mournfully smiled to the stars. The music stopped.

"There!" said Gabrielle. "Now for me." She arose, and Staniland offered her his arm. "You are coming?" she asked Ashmore.

"I think I will listen out here," he said.

Gabrielle walked to the door with the wonderful and intricate grace that marked her every movement. The other guests followed, and Ashmore, his back to the windows, thought himself alone with the night.

"Aren't you coming, too, Perry?" asked a voice at his shoulder.

He turned and saw Diane. He drew up a chair, and, after a moment's hesitation, she seated herself by his side.

They sat in silence for a time. The trees on the lawn waved their branches to the stars, as if beating time to a sad and uncertain refrain. "And I am he who held himself so superior to the comedy of life," mused Ashmore, "that I set up puppets of my own to amuse myself and cover myself with glory. And now I find that my comedy is a tragedy, and my puppets are making me dance to a tune of their own."

He looked at Diane, and found her smiling at him with a tenderness that he had never seen in her eyes before.

"My dear Diane!" he said. "But you shouldn't—you shouldn't have done it."

"I had to do it. And I am glad she is beautiful, Perry, and I'm glad I have done it."

"But"—and he hesitated—"perhaps if you knew—"

"I do know," she said; and she raised her head. "And I have always known—and that is the reason I did it." She waited until the tremor had gone from her voice. "You gave me two years, Perry, and I couldn't help you. So then I had to help you—this way."

He looked at the trees, and the leaves seemed to move as if they were watching him and whispering to each other; and he looked at the curious stars, with their bright and twinkling glances. Diane was gazing through one of the French windows, and, turning at last, Ashmore saw Gabrielle standing by the piano, waiting for her note.

She was flawless in her involved and delicate beauty; and yet at once he felt that there was something vital lacking in her that he had always seen in Diane. Again he turned to the girl at his side.

Her cheeks were flushed, and her hair was loose where the breeze had blown it. "Perhaps it is that one is art, and the other is nature," thought Ashmore; and, watching the girl at the piano, he remembered how she had looked at Staniland, how she looked at all men, with the same glance and expression with which she looked at him. "Perhaps that, too, is art," he thought, "and the only way she has learned. And I thought it was policy!"

Another idea, far-reaching in its significance, arose in his mind. "The mission of art is sometimes to conceal the shortcomings of nature. And what, then, of the art of Gabrielle?"

His mind became keen and somewhat savage, impatient of veils and illusions, as if subconsciously he knew that he was fighting for the love of the tender-eyed girl by his side.

Gabrielle was singing—a pathetic verse—and Ashmore watched her exposition of sadness. "Perfect," he told himself; and, "Too, too perfect," he repeated when she smiled at the applause that greeted her; "for sadness could not recover so quickly as that." And he smiled, too, and laid his savage humor aside, for he was beginning to feel conscious of a hint of comedy in the situation. "Art sometimes deceives us," he thought; "and, oh, but Gabrielle is perfect in everything she does!"

His idea grew and flourished. "If she does it at all," he thought, "she is superlative in it." And he searched his memory for the things she had told him. "I go to Washington to-morrow to attend a dinner to the French ambassador." Ashmore turned a startled eye to the stars. "But the French ambassador," he thought, "is at Bar Harbor, hundreds of miles away!"

And what else had she said? "The queen gave me this bracelet." Ashmore laughed softly to himself, for many of the things she had told him two years before were suddenly invested with a humorous air of uncertainty, as if—it might be said—they had become instinct with life, and were winking at him. "Diane," he said, "will you wait a moment? I shan't be long."

She watched him enter the music room, and saw him talking to Made-moiselle Minot. And while he talked, something new and strong in his carriage made itself known to Diane. When he returned to her, she saw the smiling, whimsical Ashmore whom she had met two years before. For the bracelet on Gabrielle's arm was the same one that—she had told him once—had been given to her by a president of France!

"Diane," he said, "let's run to the cliff and back, and I'll tell you a secret."

"But isn't she going to sing again?" she asked, descending the steps with him.

"Yes," he laughed; "that's what makes it all the better." The musicians were playing a waltz. "Can you waltz on the grass?" he asked. "But no; your heel might catch. No matter. I'll waltz with my heart." And he laughed and snapped his fingers at the night.

"Perry, tell me what it is!"

"I am free! I am free!" And gravely he circled around.

Diane shook his arm. "Perry, tell me!"

"I have escaped!"

"Escaped from what?"

"From the Beautiful Castle of Lies. I have been a prisoner there for two long years, and never suspected it until this blessed night. But now——"

And he made a gesture, masterful and sure. For two years Gabrielle had been the pivot of his inspirations. Her influence on his first play had been limited to encouragement, but in all his failures he had built his leading parts around her. "And I have never seen it till now," he thought. "For two years I have tried to win my way to Olympus with glitter—and thought it was gold!"

He turned to the girl who was striding along by his side. "Ah, Diane," he cried, "if you only knew how happy you have made me!"

"And have I really helped to make you so happy, Perry?"

"Yes—and, God willing, you are going to make me happier yet, my dear."

They had reached the summerhouse on the cliff, and Ashmore looked down at the sea. "Is the audience there?" he asked; and the waves rose and fell. "And is the orchestra ready?" The surf beat its answer on the foot of the cliff. Ashmore turned then to Diane, and in his heart he knew that these were the magnificent moments of life.

"Diane," he said, "the stage is set—and you are the heroine."

"It—it isn't mademoiselle, then?"

"No; it is you. You! And now I have a secret to tell you—although perhaps you guessed it long ago." His voice fell to a whisper. "I love you, Diane."

She waited, her bosom rising and falling like the waves of the sea.

"And, oh, Diane," he whispered

again, "if you could care for one who was once a failure, I would—when you are ready—like to marry you, my dear."

She was a step away—a short distance—and she covered it with the simple directness that belonged to her. And so they stood while their hearts beat together. When next they looked at the sea, the moon was rising grandly over the edge of the waters.

"Look," said Ashmore; "the waves are smiling at us!" And while they watched the silvery pathway to the moon, Gabrielle's voice came floating to them through the darkness. Instinctively Ashmore's hand tightened around Diane's.

"Ah, Diane of the Golden Heart," he breathed, "if you only knew what you have done for me this night!"



HEARTSEASE

I FASHIONED me a garden green and fair,
 All bannered bright with gay-heart hollyhocks,
 Where, whitely aisled amid the quiet phlox,
 Sweet-breathing lily censers cleft the air,
 Close-girt with lines of memory-fragrant box,
 And yet, mid all the witchcraft of the place,
 Past lordly larkspur, newly blossomed rose,
 And each fresh tint that in the sunlight glows,
 I seek on wistful feet a humbler face,
 Where, shadow-blent, the lowly heartsease grows.

I fashioned me a dim heart-garden fair,
 All set about with sunny-petaled dreams,
 And fickle-faring sunlight golden streams
 Through crystal hours amid the blossoms there.
 And yet, however fair its beauty seems
 Amid the circling of my Fancy's walls,
 God grant that when its path, dark-hedged with yew,
 Lead past the rose-fringed plot to tear-wet rue,
 I find, while close the shadow round me falls,
 A tiny patch of heartsease blossomed too.

MARTHA HASKELL CLARK.



Nellie By Helen Baker Parker

ON the top of the first page was written "The Rights of Labor." Page after page, it was all there—all the old arguments, the old charges, inflaming accusations of wealth, of corporations, of owners of great property; even—for there was no mincing matters; Anson Dirk had long since got beyond that—of the John H. Page Company.

"There is a gulf," thus he had written, and thus he now thought, as he looked out upon the street, "between Labor and Capital that can never be bridged; it grows wider and deeper with every hour of injustice. We are on the eve of the greatest struggle of all time, and every man must do his part. To-morrow will see the triumph of Right." Anson Dirk said a great deal about the gulf, the eve of the struggle, and to-morrow with its triumph. "There is no remedy but force—organized, militant force." The man at the desk liked that word militant, and he used it often. "Capital has no soul, no heart. The emotions of men like us are foreign to it. Capital is a devil's machine that grinds the poor into powder by which it will itself one day be destroyed; a towering structure built on the wrecks of stoop-backed, disappointed men, the labor and want of worn and wasted women."

The thought of the woman who had been in his life so short a time had burrowed deep in his brain, and had made him the man he had come to be.

While Nellie was alive, the agitator at his desk had been "one of the men," a worker. He had worked hard, and he had been robbed of his rightful wage. He had found it out quite suddenly from a walking delegate. Previous to that hour he had been fairly content with his lot, and ineffably happy with Nellie.

To the words of the demagogue Anson Dirk had responded as to the torch. Discontent had been born, had grown, and thrived until it had become a giant in his brain. What had not occurred to him in years before of possessions he would like to own, had a right to own, he thought of from that day. Nellie and he had come from the country. He had begun to covet the social life of the rich.

It all came over him now as he sat there waiting for their son—thinking of her—all the old unrest and strife of spirit; his ambitions to take her to theaters and concerts, to dress her as rich women were dressed, to see her in an elegant house like that of John Page around on the avenue. He was thinking how small his wages had been in those days, of Nellie's failing health, of the last hour—when she had died, missing what he had yearned to give her, though asserting with almost her last breath that she had had everything—everything.

Covetousness and enmity, once dropped in his brain by the walking delegate, had poisoned his life. In many ways he was an able man, and

after Nellie's death he had been promoted to more responsible positions. He had never forgiven John Page that it was *afterward*.

With every promotion had grown his envy of the man behind the walnut door marked "Private." His influence—a subtle, indefinable influence, like that of a shadow—had begun to be felt among the men. He saw it, and the thing had come to be a pleasure—watching three thousand men swayed as one man by a word of his, a look. His power had increased until now he was the leading spirit of the union that was growing daily more menacing in the great plant of the company.

To be sure, hours were shorter and pay was higher than when he was just "one of the men"; but the flame was spreading; hate looked out of the men's sullen eyes; force—militant force—was in their heavy tread, in the very expression of their shoulders.

There were new demands now—demands that the company did not see fit to grant. Very well. Force was the argument. It was no time for cowards. Labor was first, Capital last. Labor had first right. Let Capital yield.

The pile of manuscript was the final fanning of the flame, the strengthening of the courage of three thousand men to "walk out." That night, after Son was in bed, the agitator would mail a letter. It contained the "terms," which, being interpreted, signifies the threat. The hour was too significant for a personal interview. The name of no man was signed to the terms. Safety for the individual lay in hiding behind the organization.

The next night he was to address the men, and if the answer to the terms should be "No," as the John H. Page Company declared any answer must be, then the men, fired to fury, must walk out. It takes some firing to persuade three thousand men to walk out when most of them know not why or whither, know only that there will be no bread at home.

Other things were to happen, unknown to the three thousand. *There were to be no more any shops to walk*

into again. The hand of an immigrant was to do the deed. But his was not the brain in which the deed was born. The Hungarian had been discharged; surely everything would point to him. Had he not been seen thereafter by three witnesses to shake his stub-fingered hand at the great building in which went grinding without cease the devil machine? Had he not been heard by three witnesses to threaten the men that fired him, to threaten even John Page himself?

And yet Anson Dirk knew that in the end the law would get *him*; knew that the law he inveighed against, the unjust law that was all on the side of Capital, would ferret him out, whether he went, smiling, in and out of his own door, or hid in the farthest corner of the world. But was it not for the Cause, for the good of Labor? He said over many fine phrases to himself. His only regret was Son.

The front door opened, squeaking on its rusty hinges, and Son burst into the house like sunlight into a cellar. Anson Dirk quickly hid the pile of manuscript in the drawer.

"Hello, there, dad!"

"Well, Son, how's the boy?"

Son was hanging up his hat. He had learned early to be orderly, for Aunt Minna was a very busy person, and she couldn't be bothered. "Lookit! What I got wrote on a paper, *and my tooth fell out!*" Wait now—I got it here in my pocket! Listen to how I lithp! Account o' the tooth out. Sometimes I can say 's, and thometimth I can't!"

Anson Dirk observed the tooth, and smiled almost happily. You can't be altogether happy with a thing like that in the drawer.

"Printing! Er—no—I mean *writing!* I *write* now!" Son's eyes shone in ecstasy. It was the halcyon age of first grade, and the little wedge of his being was entering the universe word by word, idea by idea. Had not teacher, before his astonished vision, fed castor oil to a geranium in the window? And had he not experimented upon himself by mixing dirt with castor oil, and administering it to himself also in a win-

dow? And had he not discovered before Aunt Minna was half through with him that he belonged to a different kingdom from the geranium? "Lookit now! I wrote it all by myself!"

The man looked, and read, in the cramped, irregular writing of childhood struggling to write properly: "Our flag is red, white, and blue."

Now, of course, there was to Anson Dirk no such common property as "our flag." It might have been so once—a century or two ago. But now the world was bracketed into Labor and Capital; Socialists, Republicans, and Democrats; Treader and Downtrodden. The possibilities of the bracketing system were endless. But you can't tell that to a little boy with a dimple in one cheek and a whiff of chalk on the other, with stars in his eyes and pearls in his laughing mouth.

"You write it, dad! Lemme see 'f you can! Gee, don't I lithp, though? Lemme look!" He stood precariously on dad's knees—you see, not all of the man was agitator; part of him was dad—and surveyed himself in the mirror over the mantel. "Write it, dad!"

Dad wrote slowly, frowning: "Our flag is red, white, and blue."

"Your 'our' ain't good. Ain't it a nice word, though? It's a new one. I can write it backerd and forerd."

"What, now, what does the word mean, do you think?"

"Aw, go on now, dad! You know. It means, now, *all* of us's. Yours. Mine. Everybody's. And I know *more* worth—new oneth!"

He wrote, one foot pressed hard on the instep of the other, his back bent like a bow, a lock of golden hair falling over his white forehead, his little red tongue coming down over his chin, his fist clenched in an agony of rapture about the pencil stub: "God is good."

"Who—why—where'd you get that?" Son had never been taught about God.

"Oh, my girl. She telled me. I gotta girl."

"A—a girl?"

"Sure! I'm going to marry her when I get a little bigger. Mary Page, around on the avenue in the big houth. The

one with the big garden and the pond in it, and the duckth. I teached her, 'Washington firth in war,' and she teached me, 'God is good.'"

"Why, where did you see her?"

"Oh, I play in her garden all times you're gone, 'cause Aunt Minna she's a very busy person, and she can't be bothered. It's my garden like it's Mary'th—the garden—*our* garden. That's the new word. I like her garden better'n anything I got, and she liketh my ruthy nailth better'n anything she's got. Why's that, dad? When I marry her, we can live here in my houth, or over there in her houth—which'd you like? Billy—that's her brother—he wantth me to marry him, too, but he tooth in, and I don't wanta marry him! Say, see 'f you can write, 'God is good.'"

Now, Anson Dirk did not believe that God is good. He believed that the world is a big puzzle, with most of the pieces lost, a thing God Himself cannot solve; that *if* He made it, He wearied of it long, long ago, and thinks of it no more forever. But you couldn't tell a thing like that to Son! There is time enough to find it out; so he wrote slowly, with unbelieving eyes, with a biting of his under lip: "God is good."

The little boy looked his father over, from the abundant iron-gray hair to the carefully brushed shoes. Son was beginning to understand about God. "You're good, too, dad," said he, looking with a sigh of content from the man to a sheet of paper that had been overlooked. "Say, you been writing, too!"

"Oh, just a little scribbling."

"Oh, lemme see *your* writing! Read it! Read this right here!"

Dad would have tried to deceive him, but Son was learning to read by sound, and there was no fooling him; so the man read rapidly: "A corporation has no soul."

Son lisped the words deliciously over and over again. New words, and good ones! Here was something to hand the teacher when she humbled him with such mysteries as "Fill a peeno" and "Activol Cano." He said them again

lest he forget. "Corporation" was evidently something beyond a boy in short pants—even a young man who had just lost a tooth in front of Tony's candy store, between Second and Third Streets. But "soul"—now, "soul" must be an easy little thing to know.

"Dad," he said, "what is a soul?"

Dad stirred uneasily in his chair, and told Son to take ten cents, and—Boy was *sure* his stomach was O. K.? Let him run out his tongue. All right; clean as a whistle—take ten cents, and get ten cents' worth of lemon-stick candy for himself. Mind, now, just that, wrapped in paper.

"I'll give it to my girl. You know, she hasn't got any mother since yesterday."

"Mrs. Page? In the big house on the corner? The house with the big garden? You don't—you can't mean *that* Mrs. Page!"

"Uh huh!" Son answered blithely, surveying himself in the mirror. "There's white flowers on the door. Mary and me we picked red oneth out of the garden, and hung over the white oneth, and a man with a long black coat he said: 'Take 'em away, quick, hurry!' But Mary'th dad he came to the door, and he said: 'For God's sake, let 'em be!' Dad, is that the same God that's good?"

Son's father looked at the dime, which was undoubtedly like every other dime in the world—looked at it on both sides, and around the rim. "Run along," he said. "Ten cents' worth of lemon stick, and—and—give it to your girl."

"Sure! I alweth divvy with my girl. Oh, shucks! Billy'll be there, and I'll have to divvy with him, too! But I ain't a-going to marry Billy! No, not much!"

After supper Anson Dirk put Son to bed, and then he went out to mail the terms.

Night was coming on—summer night, full of the twitter of birds, the smell of growing things; full of desire, of promise. Far off across the city loomed the great chimneys of the works, belching smoke and flame. The wheels were

never still. There it was never night. In fancy the man could hear the roar of the machinery, the hissing of the belts. In such a little while—he felt the letter in his pocket—all would be silent there.

He walked quite aimlessly, turning a corner here, a corner there. He kept thinking of the flowers on the door. He remembered how he had once looked out of his bay window and seen a spray—a small spray—on his own narrow door.

And after a while he came to the garden. The moon was shining now, and the stars were out; but they were very far away. At the garden edge ran a hedge of roses, and he breathed in their fragrance. There was a fountain, and around the fountain a little pool with lilies on the rim. This was the garden that belonged equally to Mary Page and Son.

He lingered by the garden. Before he mailed the letter he would walk by the great house. A sort of fascination possessed him. It did not seem possible that this thing could have happened to John Page. It had never occurred to Anson Dirk that the rich could die. Why, he had envied this man's wealth—that he might keep Nellie!

The sight of those flowers must not soften him, however. After all, the terms were addressed to a corporation, not a person. The address was different. The world of Labor, too, was looking on. He was, in a way, responsible to the Cause. To-morrow would be a great day for Labor!

He went by the house. The white flowers, with a few dark ones of Mary's and Son's picking, swayed softly in the breeze. The shades were drawn. The man walked back and forth, back and forth. And then a strange thing happened. Anson Dirk, agitator, observed Anson Dirk, father of Son, walking up the marble steps and touching the bell. This Anson Dirk did not know what he would say when the door was opened, but it seemed only a human thing to do—just to speak and go.

He was shown into the reception

room. The air was heavy with the smell of flowers. They were massed everywhere—more of them, indeed, than had been brought for Nellie; but it was the same odor. An empty cardboard box with white tissue paper in it lay on a chair. There was silence in the room, the peculiar silence of the stricken house.

After a while golden draperies parted. John Page looked back into the room beyond, and stepped out into the light, drawing his hand across his eyes as if the light hurt him. Within a week he had grown to be an old man. He came slowly forward, and held out his hand.

"It's good of you, Dirk," he said, "to come like this."

"I just heard it. My little boy told me."

"Yes, it's all—over." His hunted eyes dumbly sought those of the visitor for comfort.

Anson Dirk walked slowly to the outer door. His hand was on the knob. After all, what was there to be said? And then silence was broken by the running of small feet—little Mary hunting for her father. It appeared that something was wrong with her elastics. Her father tried with awkward fingers, and gave it up with something between a groan and a sob.

"Let me," said the visitor; "I think I know."

"Sit down, Dirk. Do sit down."

Anson Dirk took the little girl on his knee. Her clothes were different from Son's, but he reached under ruffles of embroidery, and fastened the elastic to the silken stocking. How small she was! He held her tender body in his arms. And she had no mother! He held her so until some one in uniform remembered that it was bedtime.

The eyes of John Page sought always the closed draperies. "Would you like—won't you go in, Dirk?" And they went in.

When they came out, the arm of the older gripped that of the younger. The raw wound cried out suddenly for the balm of words. "Don't go, Dirk!" he begged. "I—God, I can't be alone!"

"I know—I know. I've been through it."

"You! This same—loss?"

"The same."

"*And you've lived on!* It's queer, Dirk, but I've got an idea—it just burrows round and round there in my brain until it seems as if it would drive me mad! Did you—did you have anything like that?"

"Yes; oh, yes—I know what it is!"

"You see, Nellie——"

"*Nellie!* That was my wife's name, too——"

Page grasped at the straw of comfort. Another, then, knew what it was to call a name and get no answer out of the great silence.

"You know, it's got into my head, Dirk, that it was the business that killed her. I—I find myself—almost, you understand, blaming the men. It's been a hard year for me. I've had a thousand things on my mind, and she—didn't tell me about this. She kept it to herself, so as not to worry me, and night after night when I was shut up in my office down there at the works, trying to straighten things out—she was here—alone—with *that!* And if I had known it—perhaps—I am almost sure—something could have been done."

"It's always seemed as if all I had went into the business—and myself, too. There wasn't much left for her. You can't run a big business like that without it. This year—the thing has hardly paid—but of course we can't let things like that get out. In a year or two things will get straightened out; but, don't you see, it'll be *afterward*. I can't seem to get over that."

"You know what I wanted to do when I made my pile? I was going to take Nellie to the country. We never had anything—she and I—but city life and society. We were both born in it, and we grew up that way. And we wanted to get away from it all, and—maybe—buy a farm somewhere. She was hungry for that. But we never could seem to quite make it."

"Want me to tell you something? I've—lots of times I've envied the men

that had their regular wages, and nothing to worry about but just two or three things, maybe, and friends—their kind of friends. Nellie and I used to talk about it. She'd say to me: 'John, sometimes I wish you were a man with a dinner pail; then I'd have you to myself evenings and holidays; you wouldn't have so many things on your mind, and you'd belong to me instead of the company.'

"You know, Dirk, we'd have got ahead faster, but while we were making our pile we wanted to do the square thing by the men. We—we had a notion—Nellie and I—a kind of dream, foolish, I guess—that we'd held onto since we were little kids, of trying to share things up. I put twenty thousand dollars into that welfare club, but the men—didn't take it the way we meant it. I only wish this one year could have been different for—her. Oh, well! You'll come to-morrow?"

"Yes, I'll come."

"And the boys—any of them that care to—you don't know how I'd appreciate it."

Dirk rose, stumbling a little as he stood.

"I'd like to get away for a year," Page went on wearily. "I guess, though, this is a thing you can't get away from. But I—you don't know how I hate to take up the struggle right away, the trouble—with the men, and all that. It's all a big puzzle, ain't it? I guess, after all, there isn't any solution—"

He held out his hand. The other took it silently, and went out into the night. The stars were shining still, and

they seemed nearer than they had before. Dirk went by the garden, and stopped a moment, listening to the rustling of the leaves. He went on by the mail box. The corner of a white envelope protruded a little where some child, even on tiptoe, had failed to reach. It might be a letter from some husband to his wife—from *some wife to her husband*. He shoved it in, and with it sent a little wish.

Faintly through the perfumed night came the sound of the fountain in Mary's and Son's garden. The man stood still, looking at the mail box. All at once—quite suddenly it was, and the vision blinded him—he caught a glimpse of what the world might be if men were only brothers; if they saw each other face to face, knew each other's hopes and fears; if they bore each other's burdens—the burden of the tired back, and the tired brain; the burden of the poor, who have too little; the burden of the rich, who stagger with too much.

With trembling fingers, he crushed the letter in his pocket, and walked on. He came to his own darkened house, and let himself in. He had long since grown accustomed to the silence. It really did not hurt him so much any more.

He went into the little parlor. The room seemed cold, though the night was warm. He made a fire on the hearth, made it out of a pile of manuscript and a sealed letter; and he warmed himself before it. He went upstairs to the boy, and there was something almost like a smile on the face into which Son looked as he murmured: "Hello, dad! Is it to-morrow yet?"



The Double Cross per Cupid



BY
HERMAN WHITAKER.

HAD it happened toward evening, the sharp slap that disturbed the sunlit peace of the Street of the Illustrious Men would probably have been lost in the spat, spat of innumerable tortillas in the course of shapement between feminine palms. The fact of its singularity destroyed the only other tenable hypothesis of maternal correction administered to some child, for your Tehuana mother never does things by halves. Occurring, as it did, midway of the afternoon, it stood startlingly out for that which it was—to wit, a hearty slap by some girl delivered in the face of a bold admirer.

Accordingly, before the vibrations had traveled the length of one block, heads came popping out of every doorway, and the young man who came staggering backward out of the milk-and-cheese shop at the corner had to endure the additional mortification entailed by running the gantlet of curious feminine eyes.

The ripple of whispers that flowed in his wake as he moved off downstreet expressed not only surprise, but were also quite informative. "'Tis the young Jefe Garcia!"

"Si, this week past he has been running after Felicia, the milkwoman's girl."

"Only to get her fist in his face!"

"How dare she? And he the jefe,

that can throw her, if he will, into the cárcel!"

"And she a *peona* just like ourselves! *Caramba!* neighbor, she was always a proud thing, but this beats all! Soon she will be claiming to be of the *alta sociedad.*"

"Not if one goes by his eye. If it tell the truth, she will soon be taught her right place."

The last whisper might easily have included the man's entire face, which expressed evil anger in every line. When quiescent, its general weakness, under the upper crust of pride and conceit, raised the question of its owner's fitness for his present post; and, as a matter of fact, it was the due of powerful family influence. His notions of the *peona* having been formed upon the degraded *Indias* of Mexico City slums, he had proceeded to apply them upon his arrival here in Tehuantepec to the Tehuanas, than whom, in their own peculiar way, the world holds no more rigid moralists.

And now—instead of accepting the correction from Felicia's small fist with manly good humor, he brooded over it, as he went down the street, with all of a woman's small spite. Absorbed in thoughts of revenge, he was almost run down by the mule train of Chano, the *arriero*, as he turned into the Street of Good Fortune from that of the Illustrious Men.

"'Tis some matter of law that lies heavy on the mind to-day?" Reining in his pacing mule, Chano addressed him. By reason of an occasional flask of good spirits or bit of rare lace for its feminine side, Chano stood well with the Tehuantepec powers, and was permitted licenses that would have got any other man of his station into pecks of trouble. Closing a sly eye, he now added: "Or is it a girl? Though 'tis said that justice is blind, I have found love to be equally hard on the eyesight. Do I but get one in my eye—*caramba!* I can no longer see even a peso."

While he stood there, looking up into the *arriero's* handsome face, it flashed upon the *jefe* that here was the exact instrument required to carry out a fine scheme of revenge. "You will take a *copa* with me?" he asked. "Just a little *copa* to wash down the dust of the trail?"

"That will I," Dismounting, Chano handed his bridle to his driving boy. "Though 'twill take nearer a dozen to do the work. Teodoro, take you the mules on to the stable."

"Felicia, the milkwoman's girl? Si, I know her," he answered the *jefe's* question after they were seated under the shady portico of the nearest *cantina*. "In the days that Pedro, her father, worked in the saddle shop, she used to bring him his noon meat. She was then but a thin weed of a girl. But the makings of a fine flower were there, and I had promised myself to watch that blossoming. Then Pedro died of the fever, and she slid out of my memory. It has been her luck to please you?"

The *jefe's* full lips drew into a thin line. "Si, if you call it pleasure to be slapped in the face?"

"*Caramba!*" Chano whistled softly, an accompaniment to the thought: "The little baggage! Now, indeed, I shall look her up!" Aloud, he exclaimed: "Señor? No! She could not be so forgetful of the dignities!"

"She did, then shoved me out to be laughed at by every idle woman on the street." He swore venomously. "But she shall pay!"

"You will throw her into the *cárcel*?"

But he nodded thoughtfully when reminded that the case was too delicate for that. Divining, moreover, with rascally intuition, what was required of him, he raised sly eyebrows. "There are other ways."

"'Twas for that I called thee." The *jefe* jumped at the lead. "Now, see. Supposing that one could lead her into some looseness, then could she be seized and condemned as are the drunkards for the city's labor. As kitchen girl, she could be apprenticed to my own service. And once in my house"—his teeth flashed between his drawn lips—"we shall see who gives the slaps and who receives."

"A looseness, yes," Chano raised dubious shoulders. "If she has not changed—"

"It could, at least, be tried. For one with thy reputation among the women, it should not be difficult. When do you go out?"

"To-morrow. We make a quick loading to-night."

"Then if she can be persuaded to slip away with thee, I shall see to it that a gendarme goes round to the shop to take the complaint of the old woman. With a force of rurales, I then ride after and take her up on the trail. Then I shall—"

"But if she will not?"

"Even then it can be done. Every night this week, she goes to hear vespers in the plaza church. What easier than to cast a cloak over her head from some dark doorway? Then, when I come, both thee and thy lad swear that she left of her own accord. Easy? 'Tis easy as—drinking."

"And what should one gain by it?" The *arriero* eyed him shrewdly. "For thee—the girl. For me—"

"A hundred pesos."

"*Bueno!* For that I would carry off all the girls of the town."

"But let it be understood"—the *jefe* returned the shrewd look—"she is not to be bothered—"

"By me?" Chano's shoulders and eyebrows this time combined to express his reprobation. "Señor! On the honor of an *arriero* that always de-

livers his freight, fair weight and in fine condition——”

“*Si, si.*” The other shrugged his impatience. “We all know the *arrieros*—as rascally a set of rogues as were ever hanged for the good of the town. In place of honor, write down profit, for if you fail——”

In his turn, Chano interrupted. “Honor or profit, whichever suits. There’s little of the first on either end of the bargain. As I say, for a hundred pesos I would sell every girl in the town. And they will be paid——”

“The minute I lay hands on the girl.”

“*Bueno and bueno!* Another *copa* to wet it down.”

In the meantime, while they were drinking and planning, events were proceeding elsewhere to other conclusions. They began with the entrance of an unruly devil into Chano’s mules the instant they passed out of his sight. Though a grunting sow with a litter in tow was one of the commonest sights of the trail, the bell mule seemed to perceive therein a fine opportunity for revolt. Erecting long ears at the familiar phenomenon, she bolted around the corner, with the rest of the mules in clattering pursuit, circled the block, and swung at right angles up the Street of Illustrious Men.

Heedless of the profanity of Teodoro behind, she kept on till the steep grade took the last of her breath, and brought her to a stop opposite Felicia’s shop. In which manner was brought about that happiest of conjunctions, the meeting of a man and a maid fitted for each other with a perfection that seemed pre-ordained. For as the mules came to a stop, and Teodoro caught up, Felicia came running out to help.

“*Gracias, señorita!* A thousand thanks!” He gave them for the intention, though it came too late.

“It is *nada, señor.*” She made the customary answer. “They had already stopped of themselves.”

With this they stood and looked at each other, she very shyly, he a little more bold, drawn like two molecules through the mysterious chemistry of

love. Just twenty, he was tall, for the tropics; and upon a trunk and limbs that were finely formed on lines of grace and strength, his *charro* suit sat like his own skin. Under a huge straw sombrero his face showed in golden dusk, nose slightly aquiline, brows straight, mouth full-lipped, all governed by large, amiable eyes.

Of her, it is sufficient to say that in Tehuantepec, a city of handsome women, where golden girls droop like ripe figs from every family tree, she could easily hold her own. *Si*, without difficulty, she could throw her comely shadow over any and all of the half dozen budding Venuses that were standing, at that moment, within a stone’s throw.

Though scarcely seventeen, she already exhibited that generous modeling which is the birthright of every Tehuana woman. Around a face delicately oval, masses of brown hair formed a fitting frame. Great dusky eyes aided her mouth’s sweetness in expressing the primal mother that underlay the girl.

Though the girl had returned his smile, it was the mother that followed with eyes of yearning his every movement when he began to turn the mules. If the girl waved him “*adios*,” it was the mother that stood looking after him from her doorway. Though the girl it was that flew after him to pick up and return the piece of manta that fell off the last mule, she did so under urge of the mother.

“This was kinder still.” Receiving the cloth, Teodoro’s teeth struck a white flash in the golden dusk. “*Si, señorita*, for many would have kept the piece for themselves. In return I shall bring thee a *regalo*, some small present on the return from Oaxaca.”

“Oaxaca?” Her big eyes lit up. “’Tis there that my mother’s uncle’s cousin’s half brother lives, and when he was here, in Tehuantepec, with us, last *Nochebuena*, he spoke always of the fine sights of that town. Oh!” she finished, with a small sigh. “It must be fine to journey, like thee, through all the world.”

As a matter of fact, his journeyings were strictly limited by the Isthmus trails. But for him, as for her, this constituted the world, and he swelled with all of the important airs of the accomplished globe-trotter. "'Tis so," he swore. "I would not change places—no, not with the *jefe* of Tehuantepec."

It is only your civilized woman that hedges her preference around with fences of modesty. Felicia, a primal woman, made no bones about voicing hers.

"Would that I could go with thee! As I say, our relative lives there in Oaxaca, and yesterday the madre had from him a letter saying that it would cost us not even a centavo for lodging or living if we could gain means to travel."

While they were talking, the mules had ambled along to the next corner, and now they turned—of course, in the wrong direction. He could not stay. But, hurrying away, he looked back and answered over his shoulder the longing in her eyes. "*¿Quién sabe?*" It might be done. Listen. To-night we load quickly, and start out with the sun. But on the return, I shall come to the shop with thy *regalo*. Then shall we talk of it again."

She watched him run with the swift ease of his calling to the corner; then, turning, she proceeded upstreet, between flaming lines of rainbow-colored adobes, back to the shop where her mother was engaged in a third perusal of her uncle's cousin's half brother's letter.

So far, she had read only scraps to the girl, and the instant her shadow fell in the doorway, she thrust the paper hastily beneath her scarlet *huipilita* and rose to wait on a customer who just then came in. As the usual flow of custom for the evening meal then set in, they were both kept too busy weighing out milk, lard, and goat's cheese to indulge in conversation; but all the time she was working, a paragraph of the letter ran through and through the señora's head:

Since my woman died of the fever, the bakeshop has suffered for lack of a capable

hand. Felicia must now be of a marriageable age, and if you will bring her in to Oaxaca, we shall have the grand wedding—*si*, in church with a priest. While she works with me at the baking, 'twill then be for thee to sit in the shop and hand out the bread and the cakes. Had not the padre milked me dry for masses, I would have sent money with this for the travel. But by the sale of the goats you should be able to meet all charges.

The last sentence caused the señora considerable heat, and if given aloud, her musing would have gone something like this. "The skinner! Trust him to beggar himself for masses that would flay a flea for the hide and fat! 'Twas only that he thought to saddle me with the charges. Nevertheless"—she cooled to a change of thought that included a picture of herself, neatly dressed, handing out clean, warm bread and sweet-scented cakes—"nevertheless, this is a dirty business, this milking of goats. In the bakeshop one would be, at least, the equal of a merchant's wife—almost of the *alta sociedad*. Then there will be a centavo or two buried under his baker's hearth, a hundred or two in gold pieces that would come to Felicia after his burying. *Si*, than to go to Oaxaca one might do much worse."

Though a vivid image of the baker, with his fifty and five years, squat figure, and wizened face injected into her reflections a leaven of doubt, she presently rose superior even to that. "If one were to thrust her at him here, among her *compañeros*, she would surely draw back. But caught among strangers, before some younger man gets into her eye, she would give in from very lonesomeness. If one could but get her there—'tis good as done."

Almost as she arrived at this conclusion, the clink of a spur caused her to look up in time to see Chano step in through the doorway. In the days before Pedro, the saddler, rolled his last thread, she had known him well, and it was quite easy for Chano to veil his purpose under pretense of a visit.

"I had always promised it to myself, señora," he told her. "But somehow the business always ran the other way. And this will be Felicia? *Car-r-ramba!* What a growth! And pretty, too? *Que*

bonita! There should be more milk than liquor drunk by the lads on this street."

Reputed quite quick with his knife in a quarrel, and a gay ruffler among the women, the *arriero* was something of a personage among the Tehuantepec lower ten. In addition to these individual attractions, he brought into the shop some flavor of his romantic calling, a whiff of wild jungle to mix with the odors of garlic and cheese. Conscious of the jealous espionage of her neighbors across the way, the *señora* laid herself out to please.

"She will do, señor." With the same breath that rebuked Felicia's smile at the compliment, she added, proudly tossing her head: "Though there be others that have said it. The young *Jefe* Garcia comes here every day for his glass of goat's milk. 'Tis recommended, he says, by his doctor." Her brown fat shook under her laugh. "*Si, by el doctor*, Señor Don Cupid. Came he this afternoon, Felicia?"

"*Si, madre*, while you were at your siesta."

Conscious of the *arriero's* swift look, the girl turned to hide the rose flush that stained the rich gold of her cheek. Her friendly smile at his greeting, the soft interest in her following gaze, were really tributes to his position as employer of the youth who had just stormed her virgin heart. Impressionable, however, at thirty-two as he had been at sixteen, Chano accepted them for himself.

"The pretty one!" he inwardly exclaimed. "If I had not bound myself to Garcia—" His warm glance of admiration filled in the rest.

After that his eyes went with her about the shop, and under stimulation of several smiles, addressed through him to Teodoro, a decided compunction formed in his mind. "'Tis a shame," he told himself. "A shame to sell such a pretty lamb to that mean-mouthed butcher! Yet"—he stifled the good feeling in the moment of its birth—"a hundred pesos are not to be picked up so easily every day. If one were to waste tears on every pretty girl that has been

sold for a tenth of the price in this town, there would soon be no more room in the sea. She will be no worse off than the rest."

Turning to the business in hand, he was casting about for some means to find out the hour and the way that Felicia would take for evening vespers when his ears pricked at a pregnant sentence in the *señora's* gabble. "This is no business for a girl of her parts. Could we but gain to Oaxaca, where lives a rich relative, my uncle's cousin's half brother, he would see to it that she got her deserts."

Trained to quick thinking by many a sudden hap on the trails, Chano leaped at the lead. "'Twill be easy to lose the old woman in the first ten miles." While his mind formed the thought, his lips voiced a hearty invitation. "*Santissimo Trinidad!* Then here is your chance. Two pilgrims from Chiapas that were to travel with me as far as Oaxaca have not turned up, so I am left with extra riding mules. For the sake of the good Pedro that mended me many a harness, they are at your service without condition or price."

Taught, on her part, by a long widowhood to grab opportunity always by the short hairs, the *señora* was equally quick in seizing the chance. "*Gracias*, señor, I shall close the shop and make ready at once. There will be a loss by the goats, but 'twill balance against the rent that is backward these three months. Don Sostenes, the screw of a ground lord, may take them to milk himself."

Scarcely able to believe her ears, Felicia, in her turn, exclaimed: "To Oaxaca? Señor! Is it really true that we go there with thy train?"

Under the soft blaze of joy and love that illumined her simple face, Chano experienced a second compunction. Crushing it down, he warned them to be ready at daylight, and so departed to hire, for the *señora's* accommodation, a mule that he knew of, which, while gentle, could always be depended upon to balk at running water.

"And if she gets you across the Arroyo Grande," he addressed the sorry

animal, leading it home, "T'will be by carrying you over upon her back."

Bursting out of thin night with all the blood-red splendors of a tropical dawn, the sun licked up, with greedy, shining tongues, the veil of vapor from over the jungle, revealing Chano and his mules crossing a wide glade. When he had picked them up at the shop, the two women had loomed in the dusk dim, indefinite shapes without a centavo of choice between them, and, in the damp, shivery mood induced by last night's potations, Chano had loaded them on to his mules with as little ceremony as if they had been so many bundles of leaf tobacco.

After the first faint light had differentiated the girl's youthful swayings from her mother's stiff bumpings, he had, however, begun to display an interest that grew with the day. In the rich sun blaze that now fired her crimson skirt and *huipilita*, clothing her golden youth in crimson flame, she was particularly enticing. Catching her smile as he turned in the saddle, Chano was stricken again with a deep compunction.

"*Dios!*" he muttered. "But you are certainly the pretty one! 'Tis lucky for the *jefe* that you travel with me only this day."

Like the flowers that filled the glades, Felicia, too, put forth fresh charms under the touch of the sun. Under the brightness of new love, the vivid orchids that burned with a sickly flame in the dark aisles under the palms, the pretty jacal villages luxuriantly fenced with rich bananas, the bird songs above, the water song of the arroyo that bubbled and burbled through long, green tunnels, all the new sights and sounds of the trail took on the significance of a radiant dream. Her fresh happiness showed in her manner, intensifying her natural sweetness.

Not only did her eyes, when they met Chano's, express liking for him in his capacities as benefactor and employer of that wonder of the world, the youth Teodoro, but they also added a modicum extra for his handsome self. Then,

with the infinite craft of woman, she was at great pains to hide her love. While she chattered and laughed freely with Chano, never, till his back was turned, did she give Teodoro so much as a glance. Indeed, so careful was she that, to an unprejudiced observer, it must have seemed, as it did to the lad, that she was carrying on quite a violent flirtation.

Chano himself so interpreted it, and, susceptible always, as beforesaid, he did not fail to respond. Approaching the Arroyo Grande, he endured an attack of conscience of a severity altogether unknown in his previous experience. "'Tis dirty work," he once more told himself. "Let the *jefe* do it himself."

This sudden accession of virtue, however, did not include the señora in its scope. Just before they reached the stream, he invented a pretext of lameness in her beast to fall behind the others. By the time he had finished an earnest inspection of the animal's four feet, Teodoro and Felicia had crossed and ridden on a good half mile. Wherefore he lacked an audience for his realistic interpretation of wrath and surprise when, after half an hour's urging, the señora's mule still refused to put a hoof in the water.

"'Tis Satan himself that has entered the beast," he assured her, at last. "And the others are gaining upon us all this time. This beast of mine is too touchy for a woman to ride. Once mounted, it would never rest till it had gotten thy life. So, see! I shall ride forward and send Teodoro back with one of the pack animals. Then, at the next town, we shall hire you a new beast."

"This is kind of you, señor." She called after him as he rode over the ford: "My uncle's cousin's half brother shall thank you for this, himself."

For half an hour thereafter she waited, too, with perfect trust. During the next hour small seeds of suspicion sprouted in her mind, and grew and thrived, until they had become a great tree of doubt by the time, still another hour later, the *Jefe* Garcia, with two rurales, came galloping along the road.

At the sight of him, she raised the cry that he had listened for all morning at his outer gate. "My daughter! *Señor el jefe*, she is gone! Stolen by that dog of an *arriero*!"

Though it had come a little late, the *jefe* was not slow in replying according to previous rehearsal. "Stolen? *Caramba!* We have heard that before. 'Tis the howl of every woman whose girl takes a leg up behind some rascally muleteer."

Yet, scenting some miscarriage from her presence there, he gave her that which she would never have obtained at his house—a hearing. While she was mixing impassioned appeals to the saints with fervent denunciations of Chano, his mean mouth drew into a tight line of suspicion, that went with the thought: "For fear he is up to his tricks, 'twill be well to take her along."

So, with the señora bumping heavily behind a rural, they crossed the stream a minute later, and galloped on.

Riding on, meanwhile, Chano overtook the mule train in something less than an hour, ample time for his quick wits to find an excuse for the señora's absence.

"At the ford we met one looking for goats at a fine price," he answered Felicia's inquiring look. "He turned from a side trail after you passed. It would have been blasphemous to refuse an opportunity so plainly sent by the saints, so the señora, your mother, turned back."

He hurried to meet the girl's disappointed look: "But first she gave me this charge—to take you forward to the house of your relative, where she will follow on our next trip."

Any doubt that he might have felt concerning the feeling behind her disappointment was at once set at rest. "Oh, I thought that I, too, would have to go back!"

Exclaiming it, she glanced at Teodoro, who was driving ahead. But, more eloquently than words, his obstinate back replied, "I would not care if you did," thus reaffirming the sub-

stance of a lively quarrel in which they had engaged during Chano's absence.

For in the calendar of love a day counts as a year, and though hardly that time had yet elapsed since each had succumbed to the other, they had gone at it with a vim and vigor that would have done credit to a married couple. In return for his charge of outrageous flirtation with Chano, she now proceeded to afford a real cause by dealing out to the *arriero* as choice a selection of soft looks and smiles as ever melted the heart of misogynist. Being anything but a misogynist, it goes without saying that they produced in him powerful effects that presently gave birth, in turn, to a hardy resolve.

"No, señor; she goes not to the *Jefe* Garcia, but to one Chano, an *arriero*, that we know of."

Being as quick in action as he was in thought, he called Teodoro at once aside and gave him, in few words, a neatly revised version of the whole affair. "Sitting in the plaza *cantina*, I heard him plotting with his *rurales*, last night, to take her from us; and if she is to be saved, 'twill be through thy wits. While I follow the main road, you will lead her around by the trail to San Miguel, that goes by the Arroyo Seco. Arrived in the town, she may be easily bestowed in some small *fonda*. Then, in the dark of the morning, while you go on to Oaxaca with the mules, she and I may take our own time in slipping away."

If he had had anything to go on, his suspicions might have been aroused by the vigor of the lad's answer: "*Por Dios!* señor, no one shall take her from me!" Not having it, he proceeded on his way in calm unconsciousness of the little scene that was being enacted behind his back.

Though it is true that the course of true love runs alike in all lands, in that it never goes smoothly, it sometimes takes a different course in the tropics from that which obtains in colder lands. Chano had no more than disappeared, before Teodoro reopened the quarrel with a sound box on Felicia's small ear. "That will teach thee," he sternly reprimanded, "to learn to govern thy eyes."

Under like circumstances, your belle of the north would instantly call a policeman, but though Chano was still within hearing, Felicia accepted with only a whimper a second buffet in return for her plea that she had done all for his, Teodoro's, good.

"Good or bad, this will make sure of your behavior." The third was of such soundness that she almost toppled out of the saddle, and his righteous anger being thus appeased, they kissed and went on, she not a whit less happy for this proof of his love, as that passion goes in the tropics. Moving at top speed of her mule and his legs, they gained miles toward San Miguel by the time the *jefe* caught up with Chano.

"'Tis he, the liar of an *arriero*, that was to send back a mule to the ford. Robber of virtue, where is my girl!"

While the señora was exclaiming against him, Chano turned to the *jefe's* suspicious inspection an inscrutably innocent face. "That is for thee to answer." He shook a virtuous finger under her surprised nose. "When I caught up with the train, thy girl had gone off with my lad. *Si*, and 'tis to thee I shall look for recompense—both for the loss of his service and my stolen mule. See that you find them, for if there be not full restitution, I will have thee apprenticed to the plantations till the debt be paid."

"He is a liar, *jefe*! The son of a liar and a lying mother——"

While she paused for breath, Chano beckoned the *jefe* aside. "The thing has run wrongly." He went on with a question that would have astonished himself had he known how firmly founded it was on truth. "How was I to know that she was carrying on with the lad? But here is thy chance without any false work. Ride back to the cross trail, and you may follow their tracks in the dust of the Arroyo Seco road."

"I will. But if they be not there when——"

Chano's shoulders threw off the threat in the pause. "Let my back pay." In his confidence in the goodness of Teodoro's long lead, he rounded up his

mules and proceeded calmly on his way. So certain did he feel that he broke into song, nor failed to exchange some jest or repartee with such as he met on the way.

"They will now be in San Miguel," he told himself, at the end of another hour, and as, midway of the afternoon, he saw the town, a long way off, lying like a shining opal in the green embrace of opposite hills, he added: "The *jefe*, too, should be there now."

In fact, his confidence held till it was disrupted by the gendarme who arrested him as his mules turned into the first street. "I am sorry, *amigo*." The man, with whom Chano had drunk many a *copa*, disavowed his responsibility with a helpless shrug. "Under an information of your own *Jefe* Garcia, of Tehuantepec, you are to be taken to the *cárcel*. Oh, *si*, you may first stable the mules."

On their way, he further explained: "'Tis all the fault of thy fool boy that is picked up by Garcia while he is showing his girl the sights of the place. *Si*, the pair of them are gaping up, like daws, at the bells of the church, when the *jefe*, with the girl's mother, comes riding by. At once he arrests them, and, under orders of our own *jefe* of San Miguel, you are all to be held *incomunicado* till the business be sifted in court."

Of the three prisoners, Chano was the last to be brought in, next morning, to the court where Don Ines Villagomez, a stout, brown Mexican, had already taken his seat. The delay was due, on his part, to an interruption that occurred while he was being ushered by his *amigo*, the gendarme, along the massive *portales* that connected the *cárcel* and court. For, stepping suddenly from a doorway, the *Jefe* Garcia halted them both.

"Now listen, *arriero*." While carefully choosing his words on the gendarme's account, he emphasized them with a threatening finger. "Be careful! If the thing fail through thy backwardness—remember that Tehuantepec will see no more of thy trade!"

He could not have said a worse thing. Reckless always, and irritated by his night of close confinement, the threat raised in the *arriero* a very devil of opposition. "No more of my trade?" he sniffed. "It has gone on under four *jefes* before thee, and will last out a dozen that come after. Remember, on thy part, that that which is between us would make fine hearing for the governor of Oaxaca, who is said to have a man of his own picked for thy post. If but one single dirty finger be raised against my trade, rest easy that he will hear of it."

With a defiant flip of his shoulder, he passed on in to the court, where Felicia, Teodoro, and the señora were already ranged in a row before Don Ines. Following in, the *Jefe Garcia* took a second seat on the dais, and, while the two carried on preliminary whisperings, Chano closely watched the San Miguel man. Very quickly he perceived behind his studied courtesy traces of the usual dislike of local appointees for the Federal officials, and his thought correctly sized the situation.

"Out of this justice should come." After further study of the man's portly bulk and brown, good-natured face, he added: "Thou art a kind one that should be easily moved to mercy. *Bueno!* We shall come without harm through this."

Confirming his opinion, the old fellow's whisper came, just then, down from the dais: "The girl has not a loose look." And though he immediately conceded, "*Si*, as you say, these innocents are often the worst," his brown eye, nevertheless, rested with kindly indulgence on Felicia's frightened face.

Almost immediately, he began the examination. "It is charged against you, girl, that the peace of Tehuantepec has been seriously disturbed, and its decencies brought to scandal, by your elopement with one Chano, an *arriero*, whose mules run through that town. If there be any good reason why I should not remand you to the custody of your own *jefe*, it is now for thee to state it."

If looks constituted a defense, the wave of dark horror that swept over the girl's face would surely have cleared

her. While she hesitated, frightened out of speech, the señora's pent-up wrath burst forth in a torrent.

"'Tis a lie, a wicked lie, señor! With me, she went forth on a journey to Oaxaca, where she is to be married to the half brother of my uncle's cousin, that keeps a bakeshop on the Street of Independence. *Si*, with me she went forth, and but for that thief of an *arriero* and his devil of a mule, she had never strayed a foot from under my wing. 'Tis he that should be punished, this vile one, wicked robber of women's—"

The girl started at the mention of her marriage, and, noting it, Don Ines interrupted. "Is this true, señorita, that you are to be married?"

"Not of my will, señor." She gave a little shudder. "He is fifty and five, this cousin of my mother's, and so withered that he looks just like the old monkey that dwells in the jungle beyond the end of our street."

"You see, señor," the *Jefe Garcia* broke in. "She confesses it. Plainly as day, she ran off with the *arriero* to escape this marriage. There remains nothing but to hand her over to me to receive the deserts of her looseness and——"

In turn, a wave of bright anger swept the horror out of Felicia's wide eyes. "Looseness? It is thou that says this? Thou that—oh, I could strike thee in the black face like I did in the shop!"

"Quiet, girl!" Though he checked her, the old fellow yet noted his confrère's dark flush. A touch of irony put an edge on his tone. "Let us not go too fast lest we get in too deep. As for this running away from an old husband, I can see in it no crime. The Scriptures have it that a man may not marry his grandmother, and that should hold equally of a girl. But let us hear more of it. The *arriero*? What has he to say?"

From his high seat the *Jefe Garcia* telegraphed down a threatening look, his second mistake. Chano possessed in full measure the generous streak that often goes with large vices; he had been touched by the innocent fright of the

girl, and, returning a second glance of defiance, he spoke: "'Tis as the old woman says. She and the girl went forth together. Also, 'tis true that I left her at the ford, and if strong loving be a crime, then let me pay. I did it without the girl's knowledge. For fear of pursuit, I sent her, thereafter, round with my lad by another trail. As for the scandalized decencies—there could be nothing better than this to restore their face. I will marry her now if it please you to send for a priest."

"*Bueno!*" Don Ines' fat sides shook under his laugh. "An *arriero* the savior of the decencies? Whoever heard the like? Nevertheless, so far as those of San Miguel are concerned, the business may be considered settled. What of those of Tehuantepec?"

Already the *Jefe* Garcia was on his feet, his mean face dark with rage. "It is not our habit to pass so lightly over misdeeds. Marry or hang them!" He flung it back over his shoulder on his way to the door. "I wash my hands of the affair."

Until the door closed, Don Ines observed a pause. Then, choking a laugh in his throat, he looked down at Felicia. "And you, señorita? You heard the offer?"

It had all happened so suddenly that the girl's changing expression found it hard to keep pace. It now settled in

soft pity, tinged with amusement. From Teodoro, who had clung desperately, through all, to the sombrero that he held tightly pressed to his chest, her glance went back to the *jefe* and Chano. "He has made a good ending of a bad beginning, señor, and one could find it quite easy to forgive—so easy that if I had not already married——"

"Married?" It came, like a bomb, from the mouth of her mother.

"*Si.* Yesterday we were married, Teodoro and I, by the priest here in San Miguel. The police took us coming out of the church gate."

In the silence of surprise that followed, the *jefe's* twinkling glance took in both Chano's foolish face and the señora's consternation. After a stout attempt to maintain his gravity, he burst out with a hearty laugh. Recovering, he surveyed Chano with mischievous stealth. "This lad, Teodoro—he works for thee?"

"*Si, señor.*"

"Now he will needs seek another employment?"

"He is a good lad and drives well." Recovering his usual reckless good nature, Chano answered the glance with a grin. "But the two of them could never keep skin and hide together upon his wage. So"—his smile passed between boy and girl—"Teodoro, thy wage is doubled."



THE OAK

WHEN men would call you strong, their estimate
Is based on your ability to dare
The wildest storms, withstand the fiends of fate,
And brave the dangers lurking everywhere.

Few pause to think your greatest strength may lie,
Not in the power to make your foes retreat,
But in that heart-protection you supply
Some trustful vine that trembles at your feet.

RALPH M. THOMSON.

THE WOMAN WITH A PAST



ANNA ALICE CHAPIN

VII.—REWARD FOR VALOR

Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed!—*Pippa Passes.*

BUT I want to play with the beautiful lady! She tellth ththorieth 'bout gob-o-linth an' thea therpents!"

The voice of Lucius Merton Camberwell, junior, rose in a crescendo that threatened a climatic yell. His mother, a soft-faced, wide-figured woman, with white, helpless hands, looked at him in dismay and disapproval.

"How can you be so silly, Lucius?" she said, in a tone rather plaintive than stern; and then, turning to the third occupant of the little veranda:

"Mother, how do you suppose *that* woman got such a hold over him in such a short time?"

The third occupant was a very old lady, with a black false front, and a nut-cracker profile. No one knew why she wore the false front, for she made no secret of her eighty-odd years, and, indeed, was wont to dig into unbelievably remote days, and gleefully unearth ancient scandals, which were as startling to others as they were savory to herself. A very witty and wicked old woman was Mrs. Merton, and it is doubtful if she had ever recovered completely from the shock of bearing anything so gentle and virtuous as her daughter Alicia, now Mrs. Camberwell.

She rarely paid Alicia the compliment of listening to what she said, but in this instance she did glance casually in the direction of her grandson, and remarked:

"Lucius is a male being, even if he is only six. He doesn't like being bored. Doubtless, the lady amused him. *You* don't amuse him. Pass me my glasses, my dear, and the *Assiette du Beurre*."

Mrs. Camberwell flung her mother a reproachfully indignant look, as she complied.

"Really," she burst out, as she placed the disreputable French paper in the singularly steady and delicate old hands, "how you can read such things, mother! Why, I just glanced through it once! Of course, I couldn't understand half of it."

The bad old lady chuckled behind the crackling sheet.

"Naturally you wouldn't, my love!" she said, and proceeded to read and digest.

Mrs. Camberwell sighed heavily, and took up her sewing. Her mother was a great trial to her.

The summer-morning stillness fell once more.

It was a very typical summer cottage, light of frame, and airy, with a high veranda that was almost a porch poised

above the beach. Behind the house the dunes of Long Island rolled off to the west; in front was the sea. Rhythmic, majestic, and yet cajoling as a great tiger cat, it lay and slept or moved caressingly under the touch of the wind.

On the board walk below were invalid chairs by the dozen, with pale convalescents and tremulous, nervous wrecks, drinking in the magic salt of the air. Old people with lined and fretful faces, young people fighting off some ravaging trouble or illness, children romping nably in the midst of it all—it was just such a mixed and restless scene as may be seen on any summer morning at a seaside resort.

Old Mrs. Merton more than once glanced from behind her shameless paper to note the kaleidoscopic mass of humanity. With all her cynicism, she found it pathetic.

Not so Mrs. Camberwell.

"The worst of these little rented cottages," she complained, with a sniff, "is that one is so on the top of people!"

"Well," said Mrs. Merton, after smothering a chuckle at a highly spiced French witticism, "it's better than having them on top of us! Where's Agnes?"

"Here," said a very gentle voice, and her granddaughter came out on the veranda. She was the oldest of Mrs. Camberwell's several children, and very like her mother. Indeed, it seemed as if her mother's softness and helplessness had become set, and, as it were, solidified.

She was so mild, so amiable, so feminine, so useless, that one seemed to feel again in her the pale sweetness of the early Victorian heroines. You could no more have endured hurting her than you could have hurt a small and rather weak bird. And she was pretty—undeniably so—with mouse-colored hair, parted gravely and gathered into a heavy, soft lump at the back of her head; large, sweet, gray eyes, and a rather plump, but not ungraceful, little body.

The absolute dew of the morning was still upon Agnes Camberwell, insipid and stupid as she was. She was the

"sweet girl" who has figured in a thousand pleasing love stories. Her freshness, her goodness, her sincerity, and her prettiness were facts as clear and true as her own charming complexion.

"Where's Theo?" asked her mother, as the girl sat down in a wicker chair and reached for a palm-leaf fan.

Agnes flushed faintly. Theo was her fiancé.

"He—he's gone in swimming with—Mrs. Carpenter," she said, with some slight hesitation.

At the name, Lucius, who had been sulking in a corner for ten minutes, burst into a wail. "My beautiful lady," he lamented, "that tellth the lovelietht ththorieth 'bout—"

"Lucius, be silent!" commanded his mother, with rather feeble dignity. She turned to her mother for sympathy.

"That woman again!" she exclaimed. "What evil genius ever brought her to this place?"

Mrs. Merton laid down her infamous *Assiette du Beurre* and exchanged her reading glasses for a more becoming lorgnon.

"I should like to see the creature," she observed. "You all talk about her as if she were a monster—Medusa at the very least! Yet all I can find out about her is that she has told fairy stories to Lucius—who sadly needs them, poor little lad! You never had the least imagination, Alicia!—and takes Theodore out walking or in swimming, which—" She paused with a twinkle.

"You may just as well go on, grandmother," said Agnes, with as sharp an intonation as her gentle voice could be capable of. "You meant to say, 'Which Theodore needs as sorely as Lucius does the fairy tales!' I know. I can't go wandering up and down the board walk, or over the sand dunes, for hours, quoting poetry, and I don't know how to swim!"

She paused with a little catch in her breath. Her sweet temper was utterly ruffled.

"If you really want to see—her," she said abruptly, "there she is, just coming out of that farther bathhouse."

Mrs. Merton gazed long through her

lorgnon. Suddenly she turned to her daughter and granddaughter with a most surprised face.

"Why," she declared, "the woman is a witch! And I vow she's worth knowing. I think I shall cultivate her acquaintance!"

Far up the beach, where there were no more bathhouses or board walks, Philippa Carpenter and Theo Farnham sat on the sand to rest after a long swim. The splendid sun of midsummer and morning flooded them, and seemed to strike fire even to their very blood. It had tinged Pippa's smooth skin with tints of most exquisite ivory, and shot a more dazzling luster into her red hair. Even her eyes were more purple, and her wonderful mouth more red. And her lovely body in the wet black bathing dress was as perfect in line and curve as was ever a sculptor's dream.

She was laughing at her companion as she leaned back, with one elbow buried in the hot, soft sand.

"We are out to swim, and enjoy nature," she reminded him, with a merry, chiding note in her voice, "not to exchange compliments!"

Theo Farnham was lean and handsome in an undeveloped, boyish way. He had the soul of a dreamer, and yearned to the open—to the sea, and all free, wind-swept places; yet his was a spiritual rather than a physical love of out-of-door life. There was something sensitive and shrinking—something almost timid about him. Such boys get termed mollycoddles at school; and, doubtless, that is what they are, among other things—yet they have potentialities. Sometimes they go down under a pitiful load of practical burdens with which they are unable to cope; but occasionally they become poets.

At present Theo was huffed.

"I suppose," he said haltingly, "that you're like all nice women. You don't like a fellow to pay you compliments."

Pippa could hardly help laughing.

"Well—not as a general thing!" she rejoined. "However, if there was anything particularly nice that you had in mind——" She laughed outright.

But Theo appeared to be in earnest.

"I never could see why not," he resumed, quite seriously. "No one thinks it silly or common, impertinent, or that, to say that a sunset's lovely, or a rose, or——"

"But," Philippa hastened to interpose, "those are obviously beautiful things."

"So," said Theodore simply, "are you."

Mrs. Carpenter regarded him in frank and interested amusement. "You are a very queer boy," she remarked, after a while.

"I know," said Theo, rather wearily. "I've been called queer since I was five. I guess I was born so."

He was not looking at her—but out to sea, with a frown between his dark eyes. Cloudy eyes they were, she noticed, full of shadows—not the eyes of a happy, healthy-hearted lad. He worried her vaguely, for it was Philippa Carpenter's peculiarity that even when she felt no sentiment herself, she was exquisitely tender of sentiment in others, and had an abiding maternalism for the piteous world at large. An impulse made her say suddenly:

"What a very pretty girl Miss Camberwell is!"

Theo frowned a shade more deeply.

"Yes," he said. A pause, then: "She hasn't much opinion of me," he added.

"I thought——" Pippa hesitated. "I heard you were engaged."

"So we are," replied the boy, still frowning, "in a way." Suddenly he burst out: "Agnes never understands. She wants me to settle down to some business, and stop reading, and writing poetry, and——" He checked himself with a visible effort. "She doesn't understand," he went on, in a quieter key. "She wants me to be what she calls 'strong,' and 'manly,' and—— I don't see what she ever saw in me to begin with. I'm not a bit her sort."

Pippa paused a moment looking into the handsome, gloomy young face, then laid her hand very lightly on his arm.

"Do you—love her?" she asked gently.

Theo, with knitted brow, and troubled dark eyes, considered her question.

"Yes," he said finally, "I think I do—I— Oh, yes, I'm sure I do—in one way."

"In what way? There ought to be only one way to love."

"Oh, how can you say a silly thing like that?" blazed the boy wrathfully. "You know there are a hundred—a million ways of love." Again he controlled himself. "I love you, in one way—Are you angry?"

"No," said Pippa, though her heart was a little sore.

"I love you," he went plunging on, "only—differently. I love you as I love the wind, and the sky, and the sea, and the big things. I love Agnes as I would love a— a garden."

"That is a very beautiful way to love," said Pippa gently. "If I were a girl, I should like some one to love me like—a garden."

She clasped her hands about her knees and stared out to sea.

Theo was already far from the subject.

"Do you ever wonder what it's like down there?" he asked, pointing to the tumbling waves. There was an odd look in his eyes, something that suggested to Pippa a bird charmed by a snake.

"Why, yes!" she rejoined quickly. "And I'm sure it's a real Hans Christian Andersen place! Don't you remember the wonderful sea kingdom where the little mermaid lived?"

The boy shivered a little.

"I always think of the kraken," he said, and,

"Full fathoms five thy father lies,
Of his bones—"

He broke off and shuddered. "Horrible!" he said.

"But, 'Sea nymphs hourly sing his knell!'" struck in Pippa. "Doesn't that make it less horrible?" In a moment she added quietly: "I thought you loved the sea."

"I do love it!" the boy cried vehemently. "But—I'm afraid of it! I—I don't understand the feeling myself—but sometimes when I'm swimming, the thought of its strength and cruelty gets

me by the throat, and—I have to come in."

He drooped his head, as if he were ashamed of the confession.

"Agnes says I'm a coward," he wound up. "And I guess I am."

Into Pippa's mind came a composite mental vision of the few glimpses she had had of Agnes Camberwell. Of course, such a girl was utterly incapable of understanding this moody young soul sitting there in the sand beside her. And yet—might not just such a gentle, domestic influence be the one thing needed to balance Theo's erratic imagination and supersensitive nerves?

Pippa found her sympathies going out almost equally to both the young people. Yet she could not help them. Mrs. Camberwell had snubbed her too crudely for that. Mrs. Carpenter was no longer of the world that can afford to take umbrage at small slights. Yet she had registered a vow to punish Agnes Camberwell's mother for sundry small discourtesies.

The crowning injury had been the snatching away of Lucius in the middle of a fairy story that had absorbed the teller quite as much as the listener. Pippa loved children with her whole soul, and little Lucius, with his great eyes and rosy cheeks, his passionate attention and adorable lisp, had filled her heart with quivering delight. She had never told fairy stories before, and had been surprised to find how easily they came. Well—they had killed the spell.

The magical mood of the splendid morning brought music to Pippa's lips, and she began to sing. She had no very remarkable voice, but, like everything about her, it was true, and it was charming. Naturally, it was a contralto, but without the heavier tones of most low voices. It was soft and a bit veiled—full of sound shadows and tender cadences that seemed to well from some hidden spring of tears.

Something in the wild blue-green magic of the tossing billows before them recalled to her an old song that she had once known and loved. She remembered only that it had been called "The Wave," and could not even trust her

memory for the accuracy of what she recollected:

"It comes from the sea's great heart of blue,
And winning a warmer, purple hue,
In eddies prismatic its colors whirl,
From brown to amber, and then to pearl.
Till it finally ends in a thin line of spray—
Is wrecked into nothing, and floated away.

"And the color changes, to one who passed,
Seemed changes like Life's sea—surges vast.
Surges that foam from the deep to the

spray—
And then on the Great Sands are floated
away."

The melody, minor and soft, died away in a gust of salt wind.

The boy beside her drew a deep breath.

"There, you see!" he said. "Agnes would never understand *that*!"

It was just then that a wild patter of little feet sounded on the sand behind them.

The next moment Lucius, irresistible in a blue bathing suit that left visible nearly all of his plump little pink person, hurled himself into Mrs. Carpenter's arms.

"I'm to be let go bathing for ter-wenty minuth," he announced, with stormy exultation. "An' pleathe, may I go with you an' Theo?"

Mrs. Carpenter hugged the small, warm body close to her in a sort of clandestine burst of self-indulgence, then sprang up, and gayly led the way into the surf.

The breakers looked quiet and tractable enough just now. They gave no warning of the treacherous undertow chuckling at their heels. Theo Farnham, with his curious double nature, shuddered at the sucking back rush of the water even at the moment that he could not resist plunging into it.

A fresh wind had sprung up—not wild enough to trouble the ocean, but strong enough to whip a sting of recklessness into the heart. It seemed to Pippa that she had never enjoyed a dip half so much. Every splash of spray in her mouth made her drunk with exhilaration; every tingling wave against her body thrilled her like an electric shock. The burning blue sky above, the

blazing sun, the gusty wind, the indescribable, great, rough kiss of the water like the caress of some gigantic lover—all these things intoxicated her, maddened her.

She was one of those rare souls whose enjoyment must always be threefold—mental, imaginative, and sensuous. To-day she seemed to plumb the fathoms of all three. She forgot Theo, she forgot Agnes Camberwell, she forgot her own troubled life, which awaited her somewhere back on land; she forgot herself. She even forgot—the child.

Then she awoke to the awful reality—a very faint, choking cry from what seemed a long way off. With the ease of a practiced swimmer, she swung herself over in the water, plunging toward the tiny voice. A great wave nearly took her breath away; like a nightmare, she saw the face of little Lucius, no longer rosy, but dead white beneath a film of wicked green water.

Then—for such flashes come greatly and in entirety, no matter how brief the moments—she saw Theo Farnham, his face as white as the child's, convulsed, agonized—*swimming away from where Lucius was sinking!*

While she worked against the undertow to reach the little boy, certain phrases rang clamorously in her ears: "The thought of its strength and cruelty gets me by the throat, and—I have to come in!" And, "Agnes says I'm a coward—and I guess I am."

Farther from shore than ever—Oh, God, stop the undertow for just a moment! Oh, God! Oh, God!

Was there ever a soul in stress that did not pray just so, blindly, unreasoningly, almost unconsciously? Pippa had not prayed for years, but as her pulses began to pound in her ears, and her eyes grew dim and dimmer with the effort she was making, she found her lips shaping themselves to old, simple petitions graven in her brain in some bygone child day.

The sky seemed almost black by the time she had caught the limp, cold little form in her left arm, swung it to her shoulder, turned on her side, and started

to swim in. How easy to let go! How blessedly easy! But there was the child. The mist across her eyes had shut out everything now; she only swam on doggedly, holding up the little body with one arm, and striking out in stiff and labored strokes with the other.

She was quite dazed by now; the pounding of her heart had grown so vast that it pulsed through sea, and sky, and life itself; it seemed to throb even into outer space. Then Pippa had no further knowledge or sensation. Only she still struck out, vaguely, with her right arm, and still held the child with her left.

It was Theo Farnham's face that first came to her gaze as she drifted out of the darkness. He was white as death, and tears were pouring down his cheeks. "What a child he is!" she thought idly, and fainted again.

In a little while she was awake again, and, being gifted with abounding vitality and energy, was able to get dizzily to her feet, and help him with little Lucius, who was still unconscious.

"Oh, my God!" she heard Theo whisper, as if to his own soul. "I could have been the one to save him! And I—wasn't—I wasn't!"

She pulled her scattered and broken faculties together, and caught his arm in a convulsive grip—the boy could feel those cold, tense fingers for years after.

"Listen!" she said, speaking sharply, because she had not as yet much breath to spare. "You *did* save him! Do you understand? I shall tell them so!"

A sort of white terror came into his face as he grasped her meaning, but before he could answer, the Camberwell household, notified by a beach attendant, were upon them.

"Oh, Theo!" sobbed Agnes, though her smooth, mouse-colored hair remained unruffled. "I have so wretchedly misjudged you! Can you ever forgive me? I truly thought you were a—coward! And now—now—" She dissolved into tears.

Mrs. Camberwell had some tearful, maternal sentiments to voice also. Every one seemed disposed to treat Theo as a hero, and, to Pippa's faint

disgust, he seemed more and more disposed to accept the homage. The white shrinking that had been on his face at first had passed, giving place to a sort of shamefaced gratitude that any one might readily accept as the attitude of mind appropriate to modest heroism.

Only Mrs. Merton, sitting calmly in a wheel chair, made no comment, and offered no plaudits. She looked often at Mrs. Carpenter. Philippa stood aside during the whole scene, wishing wearily that they would disperse and give her a chance to go home and get to bed. People put to her occasional queries, but she answered so vaguely that her questioners decided she really knew nothing about the matter.

She felt remote and detached, save for one brief moment when little Lucius came to himself. Then her heart leaped with almost a mother's pang, and she felt a wild sense of exultation in the secret knowledge that it was she who had saved his life.

Then, as they carried Lucius toward the Camberwell house, and Theo and the girl he loved as he would a garden followed, she turned away with dragging feet toward the bathing houses.

"One moment—madam!" Old Mrs. Merton's voice rang out sharp and authoritative, and Pippa paused.

The old lady was sitting bolt upright in her wheel chair, and there was a curious, intent look in her shrewd face.

"Will you come here one moment?"

Pippa obeyed, and stood white and rather drooping beside the chair. Mrs. Merton stared steadfastly into her face for a moment; then the keen eyes shifted to the green-and-white ocean.

"They are all fools," she said abruptly. "They don't know—but I know. I come from an age in which courage was an everyday matter, not an occurrence, as it is now. I am from the South, and, my dear, Southern women knew something about bravery, take my word for it! And I was in Paris during the riots, and the flight of the emperor and empress. And"—the fine old voice broke a trifle—"I merely want to say that—you are the bravest woman I have ever known!"

FRANCOIS VILLON

By Christian Gauss

ANOTHER light, my boy, and fill again
These gaping pots; I hate an empty mug.
These nights are chill; so if you'll crowd around
This flicker, while I toast my frosted thumbs,
I'll tell you of my venture with the friar.

I really didn't mean the stroke should be
His *Nunc dimittis*, and now half repent
To think upon his boyish, monkish face.
But I'm no craven, lads, and no fat-face
Shall dub me thief in any thoroughfare.
A sword point's sharp, our flesh is grass, you know.
It was a hurried thrust, and a least prick
Will help a man to heavenward; so now
The king hath ta'en a fancy for my head.
You see? They're after me again—but, psst!—
I'm in Lorraine if any one should ask.

I'm no mean craven, lads, but yesternight
I passed that lank, stiff gallows by the road.
The wind was shrewd, but I'll admit a shrug
Twitched in my shoulders, for, all said, I'm young,
And Life's a likely bride; and then I have
A song or two that I'd scratch down before
I grope into Death's alley; e'er I take
Blind steps into that outer dark, the more
Since now no friar's hand would tell a bead
For Villon's soul. Ah me, I'm doubly damned!

And yet, good friends, what shall a poor man do?
Shall life lose savor and adventure stale,
And this great Paris grow a place of peace,
Regina urbem, as the masters say?
Who would have dreamed it in the lusty days!
Why, friends, time was when every day had zest;
High noon brought swordplay, every night a brawl;
And in the morning your grave bailiff brought
Your broken body to the Châtelet.

Then would good Uncle Villon come to see
 And talk to me a deal of paradise,
 And read out comfort from his missal book—
 To me, whose need was 'neath my stomacher.

I'm sorry for the fellow, but you know
 My *mot*: A monk, a fool. Methinks my life
 Larger, pieced out with here and there a song,
 And here and there a frolic, than their life sleep,
 Wrapped in thin hopes of paradise-to-be.
 They misdeem, friends, to make this old, glad world
 A purgatory mountain that men climb
 And lose their lives in striving up to catch
 Some gainless glimpse of paradise. Our Lord
 Gave us His earth in better phantasy,
 A sort of trysting place of Mays and flowers
 Wherein to meet our loves and then pass on
 Through wide, fair ways to deathward, glad, a song
 Upon our lips; for old Earth, after all,
 Is a commodious hostel, and I quarrel
 Not with the Fates for stranding me therein.

And yet I once had will to be a monk,
 And wear the cord and their long woman's cloak;
 The cord may yet be mine!—Pray God not, friends!—
 And I a friar, indeed, for have not I
 Meek Francis' Lady Poverty espoused?
 This was the marriage that was made in heaven,
 And shall not be dissolved by no man's hand.
 They are not wretched, they that wear the frock,
 They glut their hearts on God's great peace as we
 On His adventure, and the end's the same.
 This one had supped his fill. I helped him forth.
 So one less now shall say his matins here,
 One more shall swell the blessed choir aloft.

I'm sorry for the fellow. Here's a toast,
 To monkdom! Hearty, lads! before I go
 To seek some lodgment till this scare be past.
 I'm off for the old Faubourg. Meanwhile—psst!—
 No man hath seen me, friends, and all ye know
 I'm in Lorraine if any one should ask.



MR. MURGATROYD did not want any dinner, he said. He walked straight into his sumptuous study, and stood in front of the chimney glass, looking at himself as if he were examining another man; a well-groomed, well-looking man of about forty, erect and hard.

"Thank God, I don't show it!" he pronounced at last. Then the hardness seemed to leave him suddenly. He dropped into an easy-chair, with his arms hanging limply over the sides.

He stiffened again when a servant knocked at the door.

"Mr. Tasker to see you, sir," the man announced.

"Tell him I'm busy," Mr. Murgatroyd commanded shortly. "I don't want to see any one."

"My dear chap," a cheery voice cried from the passage, "I know you don't! But I want to see you." A ponderous old gentleman of enormous size swayed into the room. "Years have their advantages," he observed, speaking like a man who was talking of one thing, and thinking of another. "You can't kick seventy of them downstairs!"

He waved the servant away and took a seat, puffing and wiping his forehead.

"Is it true?" he asked abruptly.

"True enough," Murgatroyd answered bitterly. "The devils have cornered me. I didn't know it was public news yet."

"Not exactly public," the old gentle-

man demurred. "Not exactly public. I put two and two together, you now; and make five of them! What have you lost?"

Murgatroyd shrugged his strong shoulders.

"I've lost the whole of my worldly possessions," he stated.

The old gentleman drew a heavy breath; pulled his big white mustache; coughed twice.

"When we are up against a big thing," he remarked, "we are apt to trot out truisms; just because they *are* true, you know. Allow me one. A man's possessions aren't only money, George. You've some valuable things left."

"For example?" Murgatroyd demanded, with a sneer.

"Friends——"

"Friends!" Murgatroyd struck the table with his clenched hand. "Damn my friends! It's they who've downed me! I was always a bit too much for my enemies. My 'friends' got under my guard."

"Perhaps you mistook your friends?"

"I suppose," Murgatroyd said, "you don't pose as one?"

"I came to offer any help that I could give," Mr. Tasker observed quietly, "if that is any use."

"It isn't," Murgatroyd answered ungraciously.

"The offer is something," his visitor said mildly.

"Is it?" Murgatroyd sneered. "If you made it on my account it would be,

and I'd have to pretend gratitude; but you do it solely for Edith. Don't cant."

"I won't cant. I nursed her when she was a baby. You've one very valuable possession left, George—your wife."

Murgatroyd laughed a harsh, forced laugh.

"I dare say my friends will relieve me of her, too!" he remarked.

The old man half rose.

"If I were a few years younger," he spluttered between his teeth; "a few years younger! You—you— Well, you're not yourself, and you don't know what you're saying. Angels don't walk on earth. Men don't want angels. Edith's good enough for you."

"I dare say. But I suppose you've eyes in your head, haven't you? Perhaps the blind spot covers my 'friend' Neeson?"

The old man turned his stick round and round.

"A little flirtation, perhaps," he conceded; "a perfectly discreet flirtation. Who's to blame her? You spent your life moneygrubbing, and left her to amuse herself, didn't you? Women are like little dogs. They want somebody to pat them. Edith can take care of herself. I've known her since she was a baby; and that's nearly thirty years."

"I've known her since she married me; and that's nine. She's much the same as other pretty, pleasure-loving women."

"Whose husbands neglect them," Mr. Tasker added.

"I know," Murgatroyd admitted. "I know. I don't blame her. I was too busy to look after her, and— You needn't be afraid I shall ever say anything against Edith. They can put it all on me."

"Be candid with yourself," the old man recommended.

"Very well. I've flung away a fine fortune; and a fine woman. To be candid with you, it's the fortune I care about! One woman's much the same as another! No, I won't be shabby to her. There are fewer Ediths than fortunes. Anyhow, the point is that I've lost both. Any more truisms left?"

Mr. Tasker rose, leaning on his stick. "If it is your sane self that speaks," he said sternly, "God forgive you! I was going to say that you had lost only money, and retained the most precious things in life. Friends, your wife, life, health, and honor—I assume you've kept that."

"If the devil came to bid for it," Murgatroyd said, "he'd get it cheap to-night. I'd give my *soul*—you don't reckon that in a man's possessions, do you?—to sell those lying, cheating 'friends' who've sold me! Yes, stare at me! Do I look like a man who means what he says?"

The old man looked at him for a time. Then he took up his hat and went. He turned at the door.

"Temptation only brings out what's in a man," he declared, shaking an accusing forefinger. "Remember that. If you want my help, let me know."

He waited for an answer; and receiving none, closed the door softly.

When he had gone, Murgatroyd laughed aloud.

"Exit friendship!" he muttered, and strode up and down the hearthrug, mechanically counting the diamonds of the pattern. Presently there was a soft tap at the door; and his wife entered without waiting for an answer. She wore evening dress and carried a dainty wrap over her arm.

She was a tall, slim lady, very beautiful and smiling. An envious woman had once suggested that she cultivated her fascinating smile. "Well," Edith Murgatroyd had answered, "you must grow something in your garden; and I prefer flowers!" One Neeson had called her "the fair florist" ever afterward. He interfered less than he might have done with her growing of flowers. It seemed to him that she was too dainty to grow anything else; and if there were little lapses from brotherliness, on the whole he shielded her from the dangers of a woman neglected by her husband.

She stood smiling the dainty smile at Murgatroyd.

"Shall I have some dinner sent up?" she asked.

"No, thank you," he replied shortly.

"Is the trouble work or liver?" she inquired very smilingly.

"Both," Murgatroyd answered. "You, I suppose, are troubled with neither?"

"With neither," she agreed.

"You are going to a dance, I suppose?"

"What else have I to do?" She looked straight at him. "I came in to say nasty things," she told him frankly; "but as you seem to be out of sorts, I won't, except—I have the disadvantage of being married, without the advantage of having a husband to take me out. Don't let's make a quarrel of it. You're a pretty fair man, George. Think it over, and see if it isn't true."

"It seems to me," he replied, "that you have the advantage of being married without the disadvantage of a husband! I have no doubt that you make good use of your advantages—and disadvantages."

Mrs. Murgatroyd's face blazed; then paled slowly.

"If I don't," she said at last, "it is for conscience's sake, and not for yours. I wish that I might never see you again."

She turned and swept out; and again Murgatroyd laughed aloud.

"Exit my wife!" he said; and again he strode up and down, stepping exactly on the diamonds in the carpet. He was still pacing when the servant came again.

"Mr. Isaacs would like to see you, sir," he stated. "I told him that you were busy; but he said it was very important, and he thought you would see him."

Murgatroyd seemed to stare at nothing for a long time.

"Very well," he replied at last.

He still stared at nothing when the servant had gone.

Isaacs was a very smart, well-dressed, well-oiled, good-looking Jew, some ten years younger than Murgatroyd. The two men gazed at each other hard for some seconds.

"Your friends have let you in pretty badly," Isaacs remarked at length.

"Led by you," Murgatroyd retorted.

"But you see, Murgatroyd," Isaacs said very softly, "I never pretended to be your friend. That's so, isn't it?"

"That's so. I've no grudge against you, Isaacs. It was a fair fight, so far as you are concerned. Well?"

"I take it, if you could get even with your 'friends,' you wouldn't mind forgiving your enemies? You wouldn't stick at much, eh?"

There was such tense silence for a time that the breathing of the two men was audible.

"Sit down," Murgatroyd said at last. They took chairs facing each other; and Murgatroyd leaned forward. "I wouldn't stick at anything," he observed softly.

Isaacs leaned forward, too.

"When we had cut you up," he said, "They meant to cut me up. If I had a bit more, they couldn't do it. They can bear these things down; but they can't keep them down. Any one who could buy enough at present prices would make his fortune; make it out of them; if he could hold out for a week. I can't. I've only half a million. Another half would do it."

"You've come too late, Isaacs. I haven't half a thousand."

"Haven't you? The use of half a million? Only the use of it?"

Murgatroyd half rose; sat down again.

"Not," he said, as if he spoke to himself, "not—my clients' money!"

"They'd be none the worse for it. There'd be enough to see us through, if I've gathered correctly. No one would ever know. Figure it out for yourself. It's safe enough."

Murgatroyd looked up at the ceiling for a long time.

"It's not safe," he pronounced at last; "and you know it."

"An even risk then. You haven't much to lose, and everything to gain."

"It's not an even risk. It's three to one against our lasting long enough. What's the use of trying to fool me with figures? Unless some of the things went up in a few days, and we could realize enough to carry on, we wouldn't last out. They might; but I

reckon it's three to one against. Well, nearly."

"Put it at what figure you like. It's your only chance. The Robin's Wood Mines *won't* be kept down. We'd make something on them in forty-eight hours. That ought to tide us over."

"I'd reckoned something for that. I haven't many of them. I could buy more, of course; but a good bit of the half million would have to go to stop my breaking at once."

"Stop that, and some of your things will go up at once. I've bought a lot of Durands to-day. We'll put the rest of our cash in for quick rises. Say it's two to one against us, Murgatroyd. You're a drowning man. There's your straw. Hang it all. It's a whole plank! Are you going to catch hold?"

Murgatroyd clenched his hands and his teeth.

"Yes!" he hissed. "Yes!"

"Good man!" Isaacs cried. "We'll do them yet. Well, here's my list of what I thought I'd take up. Pay your calls, and the carry-over, out of the half million you've the use of; and we'll settle afterward what to buy with what's left. What do you say to the list?"

They sat down at the table, side by side, and revised the list. Then Isaacs put it in his pocket and rose.

"We two will cut up the four of them," he predicted grimly; "or, if we don't, I shall be where I shan't worry; where money melts! Good night!"

"And I," said Murgatroyd. "Good night!"

When the door closed behind Isaacs, he laughed aloud once more; and this time his laugh was horrible.

"Exit honor!" he cried. He laughed again. Then he staggered, pressed his hand to his left side, steadied himself by the table, and made his way slowly to a chair, breathing jerkily. When the attack was nearly past, he went to a cupboard, took out a phial, measured a few drops carefully into some water, and swallowed the draft. Then he sat down again, with his elbow on the table, and his head on his hand.

"Exit health," he groaned feebly.

"Well, I knew that six months ago. Mackenzie said it would come right, but—— You credited me with one possession too many, friend Tasker. It seems that I've run through them all except life. I stake that against the money. It's a fair bet. If the money were mine—— Anyhow, I've settled to do it. *If Isaacs doesn't take care I'll have his, too.*"

He laughed again; and then was silent, still resting his head on his hand.

"There's something about that word 'honor,'" he muttered presently, "that fools a man. It would fool me even now if I thought there was anybody whom it fooled to keep faith with me—a single person—— Who's that?"

He turned sharply and saw his wife, slim and erect, framed in the doorway. Her face was very grave and very pale; and she was so still that for a moment it seemed as if he saw a beautiful picture rather than the real woman.

"Edith!" he cried; and then she smiled faintly, closed the door, and came toward him.

"Mr. Tasker has told me," she said; "and so, of course, I came home. Never mind. You are a very clever man. You will fight your way up again, and—you will enjoy the struggle. Find some way for me to help—or pretend that I do. Then I shall have my consolation, too. Never mind!"

She put her hand on his shoulder for a moment. He stared at her and drew a very long breath.

"You are a good woman, Edith," he confessed slowly.

"Am I? Sometimes I wonder." She sighed. "I should be very bad if I didn't stand by you, when you are down. It is just—just the merest duty."

"Just that," he said; "but sometimes duty costs a deal. This is a big thing, Edith; and I want to know just what it is costing you. We are at the turn of the tide, Edith. Let's talk straight. As a rich man and woman, we've come to live practically separate lives. As a poor man and woman, we can't. We must part; or—or rejoice. What does it cost you to come back to me, Edith?"

She gave a low cry; rocked to and fro slowly.

"You ought not to have said that!" she protested with a sob. "You ought not to have said it. I've been a faithful wife—well, not an unfaithful wife. It is true, George."

"I do not doubt it, Edith. The fault was mine. I know it. Money and success were more to me than you; and you've been a better wife than I had any right to expect. I'm not complaining. The point is that you do not care for me. You do not want to be with me. You would stay merely from duty."

"I shall try to be nice," she declared quickly. "I shall try to be nice. If I can care for you again, I will. You *shouldn't* have said it. I was going to try to comfort you. I had made up my mind. Don't you believe me, George?"

"I believe you, Edith. If I could find adequate words to thank you—I wish I could! There is no blame on you, even if you care for—*for* another man. Don't wring your hands." He put his on her arm. "You can't help it."

"There hasn't been anything that really matters, George. Oh, truly there hasn't! I do want to help you. I will try so hard."

"You have helped me, Edith. You are the one person who has treated me honorably; and that will strengthen me to play my part honorably."

"You would do that, of course. I will try to—to forget what little there is to forget. I was lonely; and he was kind. Kind and—and careful of me. I—" Her voice broke. "Let's both be brave, and—and rally! After all, you see, you *are* my husband, and I *am* your wife. We'll—we'll rally, won't we?"

She held out her hand. He took it and lowered his lips to it.

"First," he said, "I must rally myself. Let me think it over. There is one thing that I must see to before I think of anything else. I can do nothing till I get that off my mind. I said some things to Tasker about you that I must unsay. I will write to him, and tell him how much your loyalty has helped me, and

how highly I honor you. That little word 'honor' means so much to a man. Then I must think what is best for you. Do you love him much, Edith?"

"No, no, no! Don't look at me like that, George! There hasn't been anything. He knew that it would end our friendship, if— He never said a word. I don't think it was only that he was afraid of losing my friendship, if he said it. He liked me to be a good woman. He is good himself. He *is*! There was nothing except—he kissed me once or twice. That's all, George. You aren't hurt much, are you?"

"It isn't myself I am thinking of, but you. I can't make you suffer."

"I'll try not to," she offered faintly.

"God bless you! We'll see. Now go and let me think."

"Can't I help *now*?"

"Not now. Good night."

"But I want to."

He brushed her hair from her forehead and kissed it.

"There! You've restored my faith in honor. Thank you. Good night."

"Good night. Now think out how I can help; how we can help each other. You are very clever. You will find a way. Good night."

She smiled at him from the door. He smiled back at her faintly. Then he dropped his head and stood looking at the floor for a long time. Then he sat down at the table and wrote rapidly. Presently he closed the letter.

"That will clear her to Tasker and the world," he muttered.

He wrote and closed another letter.

"That will clear her to herself," he said, "and save her from self-reproach. Neeson will be good to her. I think I have made it plain that the one thing I take pleasure in is the thought of her happiness. The funny thing is that I do. 'Honor!' Well, I'm paying the only debts of honor that I owe—to Edith; and to my clients. There's no one else. Isaacs? Perhaps. I don't know that he didn't mean to deal straight with me. I'll warn him."

He walked steadily across to the telephone.

"Hulloa! Two-one-eight-three North.

Is that you, Isaacs? I've thought it over, and I shan't do it. I'm playing a bigger game. I know I said I'd nothing left; but I have. A good deal more than half a million. Just my honor! It's no use your coming round to see me. I shall be gone. *Where money melts!*"

He hung up the receiver, unlocked a drawer in his desk, and took out a revolver. The telephone rang furiously as he examined the little weapon, but he ignored the summons.

"How that little word 'honor' humbugs a man!" he said quietly. "Well, I'm content to be fooled. You've done the straight thing by me, Edith; and I'll do it by you. God! If you hear any prayer of mine, be good to her! A man's possessions!"

His hand tightened upon the revolver; and then the door opened. He

dropped the revolver to the floor and pushed it under the desk with his foot. He did not hear the fall; and it appeared that his wife did not.

She wore the dress that she had been married in. It hung loosely on her now, he noticed. She had grown slimmer and daintier—*daintier!* It seemed that she had grown shyer. The dainty girl-bride had smiled in his eyes. The dainty woman lowered hers. But she held out her slender hands as she came forward.

"It always made me remember that I loved you," she whispered. "I— I thought, perhaps, it would remind you that you— You haven't lost *everything!*"

"Edith!" he cried hoarsely. "Edith!" He kissed her hands fiercely. "A man's possessions!"

She always wonders why he said that



WHAT SHE FOUND

SHE found a little kerchief, white,
Tucked carefully away;
She found a sonnet, prating light
Of youth and love and May.
She found a tired, limpsy rose,
She found a clinging curl;
She sighed, "My precious son, suppose
He's thinking of a girl!"

She found he was! Dan Cupid's aim,
By stratagem and ruse,
She sought to spoil. Exciting game,
But not a bit of use!
She overheard a telltale word
Between the lass and lad;
And then the miracle occurred—
She found that she was glad!

GRACE STONE FIELD.



The Egg in the Maresnest

Marie Conway Oemler

WHEN it percolated through the province that Professor André Fréchu, sloughing his good natural skin of a scientist, had come forth pied and spotted with the raging itch of antiquarian collecting, Heaven! what a diving into rubbish heaps, what a clapper-clawing of junk! How many "finds" cost him God knows how much money! How his good francs flew, to the anguish of his household, to the enraged amazement of his thrifty friends!

"But you are making of yourself one at whom people point the finger and shake the head!" Monsieur Baudain, the notary, was goaded to remonstrate. "You are a Member—you write books that people pay good money for. For the love of God, then, stick to your inkpot!"

The savant, like Martin Luther upon a time, replied to the tempter by shying the inkpot at his sconce. Did one thereafter mention the name of Fréchu, Monsieur Baudain pursed the lip, tapped the brow, shook the head of ominous significance.

When the still angry Fréchu told this moving tale to his oldest friend, Monsieur Henri Benoit, the wine merchant laughed, holding his hands to his fat sides.

"Pooh!" said he gayly. "You take your little rakings and scrapings too seriously, my dear fellow! You insist that a moldy skillet or a verdigrised gravy boat is, say, a Roman lamp? With all my heart! Only—don't pay

too much for the mere pleasure of being stung!"

"I am," said the professor truculently, "of a mild and Joblike patience; I *never* allow myself to become angry. But you are an ass, Henri, a perfect ass! A Roman lamp is a Roman lamp; it is never a gravy boat." His eyes were warlike; his thick, white beard stood out like a wolf's neck bristles.

Monsieur Benoit, remembering the cabinets even now filling up with a collection that the owner intended should some day be his priceless legacy to France, winked profanely.

"André," said he, laughing, "you make me think of an old crow—you and your bits of plunder! But it is a very interesting beast, the crow! One reads that the Americans call him 'Jeem,' and that they have for this amusing bird so great an esteem that they build for him special cages upon their railway trains. It is to wonder, *hein?*"

"Pig of a scoffer! Imbecile! Is it thus you deride and mock me?" demanded Fréchu. "But I renounce you; I dismiss you from my affection; I leave you, never to return!"

Monsieur Benoit dismissed this dismissal with perfect good humor.

"Did you know," said he, "that I am daily expecting Paul? He has leave of absence. He longs to embrace you, old friend. Come! Let us have a family dinner. It is time that he and our pretty Herminie should see each other again, eh?" He poked his old comrade in the side.

"Monsieur," said the other, with glacial politeness, "neither the crow nor the crow's fledgling shall caw at your table."

Monsieur Benoit saw him to the door. Kindly and tolerant, it never occurred to him that the affair was serious enough to do more than smile over.

A hasty trip to Paris kept Professor Fréchu away from home for more than a fortnight, but even absence failed to smooth his ruffled *amour propre*. He summoned his daughter to the old library, now grandly styled "my museum."

"Herminie, that pig of a Benoit has insulted me. I forbid you to so much as mention his name in my presence."

"But, papa—" ventured the young girl timidly; "but, papa—"

"Ha!" roared papa. "You dare to intercede for this scoundrel?"

"But, papa," ventured Herminie again, "it is the old monsieur who offends you, is it not? Surely, papa, the young monsieur—"

"Have I cherished a viper in my bosom?" demanded papa, thumping it as if to find out. "I mildly abjure my child to beware of these ruffians; behold, then, my God, this child saying to me, '*But, papa, the young monsieur!*' Ah! You have a heart of adamant, mademoiselle!"

Herminie wished to protest.

"Be silent, mademoiselle!" cried her father. "You were about to plead for this young bandit, so? You were about to tell me that, like his animal of a father, you, also, regard my collection with a turning up of the nose and a turning down of the mouth?"

"Dear papa," said Herminie eagerly, "I was only about to say that Captain Paul appears to me a virtuous and beautiful person, who entertains for you a great affection and admiration. He has said to me: 'Your father is a wonderful man, Herminie. And his imagination! Quite the finest in the world!'"

Iratly Professor Fréchu regarded his daughter, who returned his glare with blue and innocent eyes.

"And where," he asked, with baleful calmness, "have you seen so much of

this virtuous and beautiful brigand that he can make to you these ambiguous and malevolent remarks?"

"Why, Mademoiselle Desverges is Paul's godmother, too," his daughter reminded him smilingly. "And he is so attentive to her, papa! I am always quite sure to see him there when I call now. This argues an excellent disposition, does it not? And oh, papa, you should see how charming he is—such fine eyes, such thick black hair, such an entrancing little pointed mustache!"

She paused, with a smiling and ingenuous air of musing.

"It seemed at first incredible," she resumed softly, "that this handsome soldier should be that same very ugly little boy with the ears so large it made one wonder, with the legs of a thinness to make one afraid. When he saw me, he exclaimed: 'Good Heaven, it is little Herminie, grown into a blond angel!' Thus to have rediscovered each other seemed to us a beautiful miracle. And then, papa—we—we began to lament that our fathers were so foolish as to pretend no longer to love each other while we—while we—" She hesitated, full of a shy and rosy confusion.

"While you?" put in the professor grimly.

"Could not pretend to do anything else," she finished. And, putting her fresh lips against his ear, she whispered:

"Paul—Captain Paul—desires to speak with you, papa—about—about—me."

"Ah! He wishes to speak with me—entrancing little mustache—fine eyes—sick calf!" exclaimed the professor malignantly. "Very well! I shall listen with a stretching of the ears, me. It may be, too, that I shall have something very interesting to say!"

"But, papa—"

"But, papa!" mimicked the professor mincingly. "Ah! I shall have a soothing message for this military marauder! And I shall take by the topknot that cackling old hen of a godmother of yours, too, I promise her!"

"Poor dear godmamma, papa, that

loves you so devotedly?" murmured Herminie naughtily, Mademoiselle Desverges' romantic passion being a too, too open secret.

"Am I threatened?" demanded the professor, turning pale.

"But, papa——"

"Go upstairs!" said her father violently. "Stay upstairs!"

"Very well, papa. But I must say you are very cruel and unreasonable to train me from childhood to love my neighbor—and then wish to make me unhappy because I have faithfully obeyed you." She shut the door gently.

Monsieur Fréchu swallowed hard. Then he opened his desk, wrote rapidly, and rang for his old manservant.

"Take this note to Monsieur Henri Benoit, Jeannot. And there is no answer."

"My good old friend doubtless wishes me to dine with him—it is all right with us again," thought the wine merchant, pleased. And he said to Jeannot, winking:

"He is again in his right mind, so?"

"He is in his museum," said Jeannot sourly. "I was told not to wait for an answer, monsieur."

Eyes smiling, lips puckered into a soundless whistle, Monsieur Benoit tore open his billet. The whistle died into a gasp:

MONSIEUR: Your son has been mad enough to approach my daughter with the connivance of Mademoiselle Ambrosine Desverges. I understand he intends to seek an interview with me.

Monsieur, I am a Christian; I experience in my own bosom the feelings of a father. In charity I urge you to counsel that brigand of yours to avoid me and my daughter; otherwise I shall infallibly run him through.

"Good God!" Monsieur Benoit regarded, with a stupefied air, the letter in his hand. "This Fréchu takes himself with a seriousness! Alas, one always takes one's foolishness seriously, one's wisdom foolishly!"

And he said to his son, with an air of sorrowful entreaty:

"Avoid Monsieur Fréchu, Paul. He is afflicted with a homicidal mania." Sighing deeply, he added:

"Herminie is an angel; but, *ma foi!* there is more than one angel in France! Look about you, amuse yourself with other angels, amuse me with your confidences, which will make me relive my life in my son's. Only forget this attachment which will cause you both much affliction."

"I have kissed Herminie's fingers, I have explained to her that it is she alone I adore—and she has admitted that it is I whom she loves," said Paul truthfully. "It is very easy for one to say to another, 'Forget,' when that other cannot choose but remember!"

"Good Heaven!" said Monsieur Benoit, "this fellow, too, takes himself seriously! Is Herminie also tragic? Does it remain for me alone to be sane and amused?"

"My father," Paul addressed the ceiling, "is amused. He laughs to behold the tears of an angel."

"You err," said his father. "When I behold an angel weep, I shall not laugh. I shall fly, retreat, run, take to my heels. Do you wish to know why? He who remains to console—marries."

"I shall remain."

"You shall not!"

"I shall!"

Monsieur Benoit lost his temper. "I begin to understand!" said he darkly. "You wish your old father to kotow to this Fréchu. You wish me to say to this old fool, 'Monsieur, this plunder of yours, raked out of ash heaps and ditches, is of inestimable preciousness! Monsieur, you are a savant and an archaeologist; and I, Benoit, poor devil, am an ass!'"

The young man remained silent and astonished.

"You are astonished to perceive that your old father has so much penetration, no? But I am no fool, me, even if I am the father of you. Now regard me, my son! I swear to you that I will die by inches before I will tell such a lie to that intolerable imbecile!"

"Truly," murmured Paul, "the madness of parents is contagious." He added: "Nevertheless, I shall marry Herminie."

"Scoundrel! Am I to have grand-

children who will be idiots, like the father of their mother?"

"Perhaps," suggested Paul slyly, "the poor things may be fortunate enough to resemble *you*, instead."

"Do not delude yourself with vain hopes," Monsieur Benoit's voice was mournful. "No, no, I see the dark fate that approaches! I, who abhor a fool as a work of supererogation on the part of God, must spend my declining days among feeble-minded little Benoits! Alas, we look upon ourselves as descendants of the wise; and we are likely to become the ancestors of fools!"

"But," he continued, with tears running down his cheeks, "you will be punished—your daughters will be born antiques. One hopes your devil of a papa-in-law will be satisfied, then!"

"My dear, dear father——"

"Oh, get out! Go away! Go get yourself assassinated by that old idiot. What is it to me? I am nobody but your father!"

"If you had been somebody else's, what a loss to us both!"

"Truly," admitted the elder cautiously. "We could have gone farther and fared worse." His eye caught his son's. Both grinned.

"Now that you have given your consent—in spite of Fréchu—I am going to my godmamma's for the latest news," said Paul, embracing his father heartily. "One wonders, by the way, that Fréchu's passion for the antique did not lead him to collect *her*. I am sure she would love him to distraction."

"Exactly—to distraction," said Monsieur Benoit dryly.

The young man found his godmother with a large black rosary in her hands. She lifted a languid face.

"Do you know," she asked, "that Hermine has been forbidden to visit me? Figure to yourself, too, Paul, the barbarity of that man, who refers to me as a kukkaying old hen! He has broken my heart!" She began to weep, tears trickling down her long, thin nose.

"The dear child managed to send me a little note by Jeannot," she sobbed. "She is to be sent to a frightful hole in the country, to the keeping of an old

aunt who is filled with ardor toward Heaven and animosity toward men."

"Truly," said Paul, "one wishes there were yet a Bastille in which to immure these impossible papas of charming daughters."

"Paul," said his godmother, in whose half-drowned eyes a flicker of revenge burned hopefully, "Paul, Jeannot says that she is allowed of an afternoon to stay in her garden. And this garden has a gate—through which one may look in. Jeannot reminded me that, although he or Célestine must remain with her, Célestine is blind of an eye, he deaf of an ear."

"Now may deafness and blindness be exalted to cardinal virtues!" said Paul piously. "Adieu, godmamma! You have renewed my life!" With a shining face he went swinging up the steep and stony old town street.

And right then Opportunity called to him in the voice of Jean Lebaudy, the peddler.

"My captain," said the peddler sorrowfully, "I stopped you to return those twenty francs which on a time you loaned me." With a great sigh he dove into a well of a pocket and fished out a handful of coins. There, in his horny palm, among the modern pieces, lay a large and discolored piece of bronze.

"Ho!" said Paul, pointing to it with a mocking finger. "And since when do you carry saints' medals in your pocket, Jean Lebaudy?"

"That?" The peddler looked at it indifferently. "That? Oh, a thief of a *chasseur d'afrique* gave me that, in Marseilles. He was hard up; I have been hard up; we had bouillabaisse, for which I paid. He wept, and pressed this fellow upon me. He took it from an Arab."

Paul glanced at it again; it was obviously very old, and very unlovely. And he thought of Fréchu, who was demented about just such things as this.

"Jean," said he, "keep you the twenty francs—and give me instead this souvenir of your *chasseur*."

"With my blessing, captain!" said Jean delightedly. "May he inspire you

to lend me yet another twenty francs, some day!"

"This," said Paul, "is a sop for Cerebus. May God inspire him to swallow it with favor!" And he set off briskly for the garden gate. Jeannot, looking up over his rake, perceived him first.

"I resemble," said the old man, smiling, "one of those *ennuyé* angels who are compelled to debar from paradise young and pleasing sinners." His smile faded. He shook his head.

"Things are gloomy with us, Monsieur Paul. Just now we are preparing for some old devil of an antiquarian. After he departs, mademoiselle is to go into the country, to her aunt's—a lady, my captain, in whose veins flows pure verjuice. Because of this, mademoiselle mopes at this minute in the summerhouse. And the professor would undoubtedly have an apoplexy if he should discover you at his gate."

"Is there no hope of my having peaceable speech with him?"

"If you bring a bauble with which to swindle him," said Jeannot bitterly, "you are welcome."

"Behold, then, a bronze ambassador!" Paul held out the bronze medallion. "See, Jeannot, this fellow, with a package of tacks spilled on his face, and the missing link himself on his back. He is old, he is ugly, he is useless; therefore, an antiquarian should be enraptured with him."

Jeannot took it, eying it with open aversion.

"If the desire to possess it seizes him, I may make of it a wedge for you," he said thoughtfully. "In the meantime, I will call mademoiselle—this deafness makes it difficult for me to carry on a conversation." And, having softly called Herminie, he began stolidly to nail up a vine.

"I do not ask you," said Herminie sorrowfully, "to come in, Paul."

"But you can reach to me your little hand, can you not?" The soldier's face was pressed against the bars. He kissed the small hand that she thrust out to

him. "If you only knew how immensely I love you, Herminie!"

"And I, also, love you very much," said the young girl bravely. She regarded him thoughtfully. "Tell me, my friend, do ugly little boys as a rule grow up into beautiful young men?"

"Very few, I think," said Paul, laughing. He asked: "Have you seen many?"

She shook her head. "No. But one. And there is something in my heart which tells me that if I had not seen your eyes, Paul, I—I—should never have seen anybody else's. It is because I know this—that I must—disobey my dear father—and love you, Paul. But you must not quarrel with my father."

"Good Heaven! It is not I who quarrel!" exclaimed Paul. "Me, I long to embrace him; but one does not wish oneself carved like a chicken even by one's papa-in-law!"

Jeannot approached, with a flushed and disturbed face. He waved his hammer. "Fly!" said he breathlessly. "Begone, my son, begone!"

But even as he spoke Monsieur Fréchu emerged from a clump of shrubbery. Awakened from his afternoon nap, he had strolled out into his garden—and Jeannot had not seen or heard him in time. The professor came to a standstill, staring, choking. His daughter stood at his gate; just outside leaned a handsome young officer, who politely lifted his cap.

"So! One finds you prowling about one's back gate, Apache!" the visitor was greeted pleasantly. "Jeannot!"

The old man looked up mildly. "What do you see, scoundrel?"

"Only Monsieur Henri's lad talking to our little mademoiselle," said Jeannot cheerfully. "However, I warned him to begone. One would think a soldier, at least, knew the use of his legs, but no, this one plants himself like Jonah's gourd outside our gate." Jeannot took himself off, pausing to cast upon Paul a look of reproachful commiseration.

Monsieur Fréchu thrust a purple visage close to the gate bars.

"Go away!" he shouted. "Go back

where you come from; and take this with you, malefactor!—my daughter is a fool; if she were twice as big a fool, you should not have her!"

"Truly, the wisdom of selecting you for one's father-in-law may be questioned," said Paul doubtfully. "Nevertheless, Monsieur Fréchu, I shall marry your daughter. You understand, do you not? I shall marry your daughter!"

"I challenge you!"

"I decline to receive a challenge from you," said Paul firmly. "I refuse to murder you, my friend."

"I challenge you, I say!" shrieked the professor. "I pull your nose, I slap your cheek, I box your ear! Y-a-a-a-h!" He shook the gate furiously. "And I shall place my daughter where there will be no more meeting of buccaneers at garden gates, I promise you!"

"Nevertheless, I shall marry her," said Paul composedly. "Au revoir, my little Herminie! Do not be downcast! I live, I love you, you are mine!" Once more he bowed, with a charming and debonaire grace, to the violet-visaged savant, kissed his hand to Herminie, and marched off gallantly.

"Dear papa," said Herminie, lifting her face suffused with tears, "did you not hear? He loves me, I am his!"

"We shall see whose you are, mademoiselle!" snarled "dear papa." "Just as soon as Monsieur Ferriand's visit is over, you go to your Aunt Mathilde's. I defy this Apache of yours to prowl about *her* gates!" Firmly he seized his daughter's hand, and led her, weeping, into the house.

"Célestine!" he shouted for his old housekeeper. "Name of a pig, must one bawl for you all day, Célestine? Go upstairs with mademoiselle. Begin to prepare for her journey immediately!"

"Mademoiselle really leaves us, then?" Célestine appeared stupefied. "Good heavens! Monsieur, monsieur, figure to yourself this wretched house with mademoiselle gone! Who plans your meals, monsieur? Mademoiselle! Who makes of this a Christian home? Mademoiselle! Who saves us all from

madness and distraction in spite of your squandering and foo——"

"A hammer and nails, *mon Dieu*, to nail up her mouth of a harpy!" gnashed the professor.

Célestine's good eye grew red; over it appeared the film one sees at times upon the eye of the hen. She lifted her voice as a stiletto that stabs the eardrums.

"I am a box or a barrel, me! I reach gray hairs in your service—I, who was beloved of madame, your sainted wife—and in my old age I am to be nailed up!"

Fréchu felt himself distracted. He adored his daughter. To send her away from him tore his soul. He was seated dejectedly before his desk, his head propped upon his arms, when Jeannot entered the library with lights.

"Look, monsieur, at this curious old thing that Captain Paul was showing me when you—interrupted his conversation," said the old man delicately. And he placed in the collector's greedy hand a venerable bronze medallion covered with undecipherable lettering; on one side a coiled and rayed serpent; on the other an unknown and archaic figure.

"In the morning I will look at it carefully and let you know what it probably is and its value," said the antiquarian, with creditable indifference.

In the morning, however, Monsieur Ferriand unexpectedly arrived. The great archaeologist, an admirer of Professor Fréchu's lucid and brilliant books, had in passing stopped to visit him. Amusedly and amazedly, he looked over the crowded cabinets. Once or twice he touched with his slim yellow fingers a bit of copper, a sword-blade, a coin. But at sight of the bronze medallion his eyes gleamed. He snatched it.

"Mother of God!" he breathed. "Is it possible? One counts upon the fingers of a hand every Hittite souvenir on earth, monsieur," said he, after a careful examination. "And you have one. This, monsieur, is a Hittite coin, possibly the only one in existence, and quite the most perfect." After a pause, he added: "You will doubtless have offers for this coin from all the great

museums. I myself speak first for the Louvre."

"What is mine," said Fréchu grandly, "is my country's!"

And he explained that the medallion had just come into his possession; and that he must make inquiries before he could decide what was to be done with it.

Monsieur Ferriand departed, congratulating his host. A few days later, the *Figaro* remarked that the "celebrated antiquarian," Professor Fréchu, had in his collection a wonderful Hittite bronze medallion. Then the *Temps* told Paris that the Louvre was about to offer a princely price to the "great archaeologist," Professor Fréchu, for the finest archaic coin in existence.

"One reflects with sorrow and wonder," mused *Humanité*, commenting upon the find, "that the Hittite Workman in all probability received as few of these coins for his Labor as the Modern Workman wrings to-day from the griping fist of Modern Capitalism. Let Modern Capitalism, therefore, take heed, lest it, too, perish as utterly as those Hittite masters, who left behind naught but a bit of bronze and a puzzle for succeeding generations!"

The snowball of antiquarian celebrity rolled and grew, to the enraptured delight of its object. Chance had dropped into the Fréchu mare's-nest a golden egg.

But in the meantime Herminie languished in the keeping of her Great-aunt Mathilde, to whom the devil was, say, nothing but an inhuman man, and man an inhuman devil. This pleasing sentiment was daily grinded into Herminie, who grew languid upon such aliment.

And the captain of lancers impatiently cooled his heels in garrison. To him in this dark hour came, as a ray of light, a letter in old Jeannot's horrible handwriting:

That saint's medal you left with me was not a saint, but a hussy of a Hittite goddess. It seems that heretics, whom one dares swear never heard mass nor knew a saint from a soldier, are enamored of these risqué goddesses; also, that there are no more things like this; which seems to me very good. Monsieur Fréchu dotes upon this

Hittite, and has said to me frequently, "Offer this freebooter a fair price, Jeannot." For after all this réclame, he must, of course, possess her.

Upon a reply from Paul, Jeannot, in the pocket of whose old coat also reposed a brief and melancholy letter from Herminie, sought the professor.

"Monsieur Benoit writes me to return him that Hittite lady of his—the same lady I loaned to you, monsieur," said the old man respectfully.

The professor, whose nightmare of late had been just this same request, turned pale as ashes. This chef d'œuvre had firmly established his jealously sought reputation as an antiquarian. To him was given the credit of its finding and its possession. On the strength of this he had written that now famous brochure—"The Hittites: Their Place in History, Sacred and Profane: with notes covering their Arts and Religion. By André Fréchu, Member of the Institute"—which has since been incorporated in all modern encyclopedias. Called upon to give this priceless object to a hard-riding and reckless captain of lancers? God forbid! Ask him for his eyeteeth, rather!

"But," he remonstrated, panic-stricken, "this is sheer, wanton villainy. What can this assassin want with my medallion?"

"How should I know?" shrugged Jeannot. "I dare say he wants it because it belongs to him." Jeannot fingered Herminie's note in his pocket, to harden his heart. "Give me the hussy, monsieur, and let us rid ourselves of her," he urged.

"Never!" said the collector, raging. "Let him name his price, Jeannot, and I will try to pay him, the bloodsucker! But I must have this bronze."

"I will write Monsieur Paul then," said the old man, concealing a smile. A fortnight later he again approached his master; this time with a doleful face.

"I shudder to impart to you, monsieur, the accursed notion which that devil of a Hittite has put into the head of Monsieur Paul," said he. "Ah, I knew her for an evil one! Did I not bid you get rid of her? Listen, then:

Monsieur Paul thinks of bestowing this medallion upon his godmother." He paused significantly. "Whoever accepts the bronze, monsieur, must accept with it—Mademoiselle Ambrosine."

Monsieur Fréchu broke into a cold perspiration. He lifted a murderous face.

"And if I justly throttled this bandit, I should unjustly be guillotined!" he moaned. Clutching his head, he sank into an attitude of profound dejection.

"Suppose I accepted this fiendish compromise?" he remarked presently. "My God, Thou knowest her mummy-like hardness, her incredible imperviousness to time! Alas, I should be unable to survive her!"

"Of a surety," agreed Jeannot, wagging his head and holding up his hands. "Such a lady might contract a marriage with the Wandering Jew, and she would infallibly survive *him*, much less you, monsieur."

"She will be teetering about the edge of the earth the day after the Day of Judgment," wailed the professor. "Ah, ah, what am I to do?"

Jeannot considered, hand upon chin. "Monsieur, as a child, was very much attached to me," he said modestly. "I think he even now retains a certain affection for his old friend. Let me, then, monsieur, implore him to abandon this atrocious plan and come to a more reasonable decision."

Professor Fréchu nodded gloomily. Truly, of late he had fallen upon evil days. His daughter was practically banished; his friends were estranged; and Célestine had revengefully established in his kitchen a Reign of Terror. There were daily burnings; the soup tasted of salt and ashes; the beef was a holocaust or a blood offering.

"This bread," he had only yesterday been driven to complain, "is atrocious. One comes across such loaves only in the ovens of Pompeii, baked two thousand years ago."

"I have, then, succeeded in pleasing you!" exclaimed Célestine rapturously. "Monsieur, accept with the cook's compliments this loaf for that fine museum

of yours upstairs. To-morrow, if it pleases the good God, I shall bake for you another loaf yet more imperishable than this of Pompeii."

The harassed savant longed vehemently to throttle her, and mournfully conquered the desire; he knew, too, that he had not the moral courage to dismiss her. He began to wear a hunted and a jaded look.

After a delay that stretched the professor's nerves to the breaking point, Paul replied finally. The matter, he thought, was very simple. Monsieur Fréchu wanted the medallion. Paul wanted Herminie. Why not, as it were, exchange? Monsieur Fréchu had practically appropriated Paul's property—without explanations to any one. He could, therefore, keep it, for Herminie's sake. Then, in a few simple and manly words, Paul expressed his profound affection for the young girl. He asked her father to consider her happiness and his above a passing caprice.

Professor Fréchu's ears burned. He *had* taken Paul's medal, and he knew it, accepting all the glory of discovery for himself. He locked himself in his library, and laid upon his desk that bit of bronze over which had hung the shadow of an ambiguous reputation, and the yet more angular shadow of Mademoiselle Desverges. He recalled certain sentimental sillinesses of the lady's, and terror assailed him at the thought of that humorless impeccability permanently ensconced at his fireside, coyly pursuing him with fearsome blandishments which he would be powerless to flee. And then before him rose the young and fresh face of his daughter; the fine, frank face of Henri's son. *Hélas!* Love is for such as these, after all! His heart of a father relented, was filled with affection for these charming youngsters.

He locked the medallion, in its purple velvet case, in the cabinet that it honored. Then he rang for Jeannot, but Célestine answered, grimly unfriendly, truculently on guard.

"Somebody's coming to live with us in a few days, Célestine," he began casually.

"Mam'selle Ambrosine?" demanded Célestine. "Ah! Your poor wife, my sainted mistress! I will not stay here and see her place filled by an old maid! Accept of me my leave-taking immediately." She began to weep noisily.

"Who gives this man to that woman to be her lawful prey?" roared the professor. "*I do not!*" He swore at his cook vitriolically and thoroughly; who received the sulphurous outburst with a tolerant and gratified smile.

"And so our own little mademoiselle returns!" she said joyfully.

"But," said the professor, shaking his head mysteriously, "she may not remain very long with us, my good Célestine."

Célestine clasped her hands. "Is it

Monsieur Benoit's Paul—Captain Paul?" asked she ecstatically.

The professor expanded his chest, smiling benignantly. Happiness descended upon him as a mantle. He felt himself behaving nobly—forgiving enemies, aiding love. Also, that bronze medallion was unalterably his.

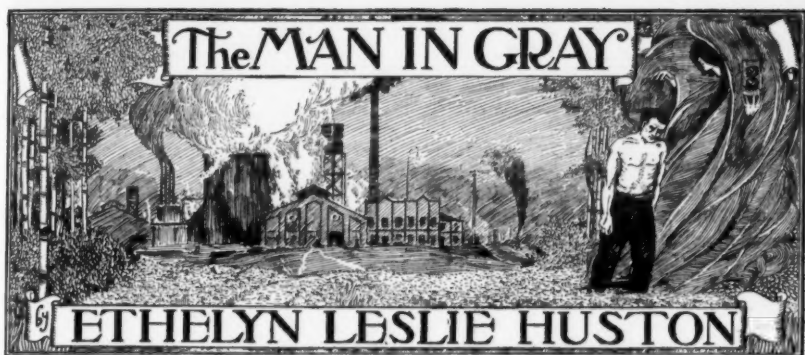
"Célestine," said he, "I need your good help. You are a genius of the kitchen, Célestine. I wish to ask my old friend Henri to dine with me. Also"—he was going to be magnanimous while he was at it—"Monsieur Baudain. Perhaps the curé himself might care to join us. *Hein!* But we will make a celebration, Célestine! It is not so often one may rejoice over such a fine marriage in one's family!"



THE LONG ROAD

FARING forth on the Long Road,
My galliard heart and I—
We have been gypsies joyous,
Or low the way or high.
Daring to look behind us,
Down Memory's misted slope;
Daring to look before us,
Up gallant Hills of Hope.
Days we have had of dalliance,
In low, green, velvet meads;
Gayly we have rioted
What time the vintage bleeds.
We have stumbled, faint and hungry,
Across the stony sands;
Happily we have loitered,
In the heart of the fruitful lands.
To wear the sweet red roadside rose,
We have dared the savage thorn;
We have wrought and sung with the reapers
In the harvest of the corn.
With every wind a comrade,
And every star a friend,
We shall be joyous gypsies,
Even unto the end.

MARTHA McCULLOCH-WILLIAMS.



PHYSICIANS will tell you of many crimes that are accepted by the great public without question because of their sanction by the great god Custom; and they will shrug their shoulders, and ask, "What can we do?"

Homicide can be glossed over if committed in a legal fashion. The devotion of a mother, wife, or lover is sometimes more deadly than the yellow fever, and may sap strength and vitality daily in the holy name of duty. And the family doctor knows it, and lifts his shoulders, and hurries on to his next case. And when the law is mentioned he closes one eye with mild irony and grim significance.

They are not lawmakers—the medical fraternity—so they let the solemn bigwigs grind on and fill ponderous tomes with involved wisdom, while they meanwhile establish a little code peculiar to themselves that would rather astonish the laity if known.

Take the case of Timmy Dolan as an example. Timmy was fourteen, and worked as helper in the big car shops. His muscles had been overdeveloped at the expense of the rest of his thin, ill-nourished body, and he was one of the best and quickest of the helper gang, which comprised boys about his own age.

His boss was big Pat Casey, and they worked together in the great, smoky shops with the faithful, trained pre-

cision of a big and little piston, moving in unison in one perfect engine.

The day the break came, Timmy felt "off his feed," as he expressed it. He had felt queer for several days. It was a bitter pull to get his aching legs and back to the perpendicular mornings, and the mighty hammer blows that thundered through the shops seemed to be beating his head to a jelly.

But it was a rush season, and the shops were going full blast, and it was no time for whining. So Timmy pulled the leather strap tighter over the "gone" feeling in his tummy, and set his teeth.

The blinding glare from the big furnaces made him shrink, and the reverberating blows of iron upon iron hurt his whole body till it ached and quivered in the deafening uproar. But he sprang back and forth like a smoke-grimed imp, darting from crimson glow to black shadow as big Pat's titanic body, naked to the waist, bent and swayed in magnificent poses near huge black beams that swung on arm-thick chains as they drew slowly and ponderously back till their ends issued, rose pink and quivering white, from the saffron-yellow furnace mouths.

The moment came at last, however, when Casey reached back a herculean arm with a tense black fist ready for the needed iron bar, and for the first time in history it failed to slip deftly into his waiting grasp.

Casey, his steady eyes shining in his blackened, sweat-grimed face, clawed the air wildly behind him, while he held the mighty crane steady with his left hand. And finally he looked wrathfully around.

Timmy was there, but he was doing a little turn by himself. His head was down, and he was running around and around in a small circle in a funny little dogtrot, quite oblivious of car shops and rush seasons and apoplectic bosses. Mr. Casey exploded.

"What the"—interval here filled with reflections in a vocabulary peculiarly technical, and artistically handled by Mr. Casey—"re ye doin'?"

This was in a deep-lunged roar that "carried" even through the hideous clangor of the shops. But the dogtrot kept up, and Mr. Casey made a murderous lunge.

The helper was caught by the leather belt that held his tummy—and not much else, as his wearing apparel was reduced to the most primitive scale. And the boss paused like a bewildered bull as Timmy promptly hung from his clenched fist as limp as one of Mrs. Dolan's mop rags on her back fence.

Another rumbling roar brought some of the other smoke-grimed demons on the run, carrying emergency buckets, and Timmy was laid on the cinders and doused.

After the doctor had got through, and the smoke had been washed off, Timmy's face on the pillow was the color of weather-beaten putty. The doctor looked grave, and suggested to Mrs. Dolan that he bring one of the neighborhood nurses; but that lady was immediately up in arms.

"Who'll nurse the b'y better than me that's his own mother?" demanded Mrs. Dolan, in virtuous indignation. "It'll be no shtrange wumman that'll nurse a choild o' mine whoile I can shtand on me two legs. Not but what thim nurses do be foine craythers, doctor, dear—but a mother is the best nurse for her own, acushla."

Then the word went around, and Mrs. Dolan became the center of interest in the quarter. According to tra-

dition, old and young, big and little, trooped to the little cottage to see Timmy.

And they saw him.

The putty color of Timmy's face became a mottled brick red, and the busy, overworked doctor looked worried.

"He must be kept quiet, Mrs. Dolan," he warned.

"An' indade an' he is that," replied Mrs. Dolan heartily.

"And very light diet—thin gruel, you know."

"Sure, I know. Don't I wurruck night an' day over 'im?" said Mrs. Dolan; and the doctor sighed, and went on his hurried rounds.

Then Mrs. Keenan came over with a bowl of soup so rich that yellow bubbles of fat floated thickly on the top, and went in to see the invalid.

She roused him from a troubled doze, and he looked at her with fever-bright eyes.

"Sure, an' it's foine ye look, Timmy, lad!" cried Mrs. Keenan, in her big, throaty voice. "Look at the color av 'im, Mrs. Dolan. It isn't sick he is at all, at all. I think ye're just after playin' gintleman, Timmy!" And Mrs. Keenan's big laugh shook the windows, while Timmy cringed.

"Sit up, darlint, an' ate the foine soup she brought ye," said Mrs. Dolan.

And the soup was spooned carefully down Timmy's hot throat.

"There, that puts stren'th into his bones. The docther says just gruel, but a little soup'll hurt no wan," said his mother comfortably.

"Sure, the docthers do be that fussy," agreed Mrs. Keenan, with her hands in the air. "Whin me Maggie—the saints rest her sowl!—was sick—"

A long and detailed account of Maggie's illness and death followed, while Timmy's hot and aching head rolled restlessly on the pillow.

The mottled red grew deeper as the voices went through his two ears and clashed in the center of his head. Waves of strange dizziness passed over him, and then his head seemed to leave his body and float a long way off.

Just as Maggie's funeral had been

attended to by the voluble Mrs. Keenan, Katie Quinn and Tom, her big husband, who did night work as a stableman, came 'cross lots, and in at the back door.

"Come on in, Katie—an' is it you, Tom Quinn?" called Mrs. Dolan stridently; and Timmy's head joined his body with a jerk that brought his teeth together with the pain. "Here's the sick b'y. Come an' look at 'im."

Big Tom's tread shook the little cottage, and as he entered the bedroom his big shoulders seemed to fill all the remaining space. Timmy gasped painfully. Tom took the burning little fist in his own broad and horny grasp, and shook it soberly.

"Phwat's this, Timmy, lad?" he exclaimed, in a voice that he sincerely believed to be softened, but that sent Timmy's bed swinging back and forth sickeningly near the ceiling. "Are ye layin' down on th' job in rush toime, ye gossoon? Go on wid ye! What'll th' boss say?"

There was a burst of laughter from the women at this bit of facetiousness, and Timmy's eyes closed with a low moan that was drowned in the merriment. The conversation became general then, the women standing with their arms wrapped in their aprons, and Tom Quinn balanced on the footboard of the bed, where the swinging of his heavy foot passed through Timmy's long, thin body with quivering pain at every swing.

Out on the street some boys passed on the way to the woods that crested the near hill, and Mrs. Dolan stepped wrathfully to the door as they whooped.

"Will ye shtop yer n'ise, ye young divils!" she cried. "Don't ye know me b'y is sick? G'wan now, or it's Policeman Finnerty I'll be havin' run yez all in, ye shpalpeens!"

The boys fled, abashed, and Katie Quinn resumed her tale of what the stable boss had done to her Tom. Timmy lay with closed eyes, swallowing the sick moans that welled up against his parched lips. The thunderous beating of iron against iron in the shops got mixed up somehow with the

confusion of voices that swept in engulfing waves over him, and the pounding on his temples and on the top of his head seemed agony enough without the piece of iron that bored steadily into the back of his neck. It all made him very sick at his stomach, and the swinging of the bed was acute misery.

He thought with sick longing of the woods where the boys were going. There was one spot that was his own particular refuge. On Sundays his tired little legs always climbed up there, where it seemed so close to the clean blue sky, and in a hollow near a spring the drifting leaves gathered and made a bulky couch for small boys with aching muscles.

He used to lie there long, blissful hours, watching the lazily drifting clouds, while the birds and squirrels he had tamed came to be fed. Sometimes the squirrels would sit on his stomach and chatter impertinently down into his face, and then scold excitedly when his laughter shook them off.

He wanted to be there—if he could only crawl there somehow—far up on the hillside, where it was cool and still, and the trees whispered such mysterious things as they gravely bent their heads close together and rustled their silken leaves soothingly. The tiny spring tinkled with little silvery notes down over the rocks and twisted roots, and he loved to hear its small, breathless rushes, and then the gurgling laughter as it stopped and bubbled in a pool the size of a teacup.

It was all so wonderfully pure and sweet smelling up there—the earth smelled like flowers, and the breath of pine needles and the starlike blossoms in the grass were like a lovely bath to his smoke-filled lungs.

If he could only crawl there somehow, he would be better.

But more callers came to offer sympathy and assistance and soup and jellies, and the mottled red grew deeper as evening came, and the hot hands twisted in the best white spread, put over him in honor of the visitors.

The best parlor lamp was brought in after supper, and the gorgeous round globe, painted with large and very gay flowers, filled the room with a bright and practically untempered glare. Timmy wondered why closing his eyes appeared to make so little difference. The glare was just as strong through the lids, and he kept opening his eyes after a while to make sure that it was not the glare of the furnace, because its heat seemed to be on his face, and he kept feeling as if some one were holding him close to the great round furnace mouth, and he was struggling and gasping in the blistering waves that played around that pit of white flame.

The air of the bedroom grew more and more stifling as the visitors passed in and out through the evening. But at last they all left, and Timmy weakly held onto the spread, waiting dizzily till he would be alone—till he could get the bed to stop swinging—till the nerves that kept twitching angrily in every limb would begin to quiet down and let him rest. He wanted so to rest! Never in his life had he wanted so much to rest.

Mrs. Keenan, the faithful, was to "help watch" to-night. The women talked late, as they fussed back and forth between kitchen and bedroom. Then Mrs. Dolan insisted on Mrs. Keenan's lying down on her bed for a nap, and said that she herself would lie on the sofa in Timmy's room.

This was finally arranged, and a gentle gurgle soon told Timmy that Mrs. Dolan was asleep.

But for some reason Timmy did not seem any easier. His face was purple now, and his eyes glowed like coals, while his lips were like strips of black leather. The house was quiet, but when he closed his eyes the voices swept back in billows over him, and the iron hammers of the shops beat harder and harder on his head. Casey kept calling him, and he struggled to get up, because he must hand him that iron bar. But somebody held him in a grip that made him want to scream out with the pain. And when he struggled, he always began to sink through the bed—

far, far down, till he clutched desperately at the spread. And then waves of nausea, terrible nausea, went over him, till his hot eyes filled with tears at the misery he was in.

The scrawny hands were the color of oyster shells where they were twisted in the spread, and by keeping his eyes open he managed to hold back the voices and the clangor of the shops. Maybe if he could hold out a while without closing his eyes he could stave them off altogether.

The nerves were twitching and tying into knots in his legs and arms, and the heat of the closed room was fearful, but he held all his dazed, tortured mind on the fight to keep his straining eyes from closing for an instant. The head was back, and the blackened mouth open, the knees were drawn up, and the clutching hands flung wide, but at last he told himself anxiously he was managing to get that confusion of noises thrust back.

If he could only do that! If only he——

"Mrs. Dolan! Hist, wumman, dear!"

A head was thrust in at the door, and a rasping, loud whisper roused Mrs. Dolan with a start.

"Ye must be wore out, so it's a cup o' tay I've made fer ye. Come now, darlint, an' have a bit an' sup. It's a sick wumman ye'll be nixt if ye don't be takin' care o' yerself."

"My, my, but it's the good heart ye have in your body, alanna!" said Mrs. Dolan, struggling to her feet and yawning loudly. "Sure, an' I haven't closed an eye in me head this blessed night, it's that worried I am. But yez are right—it w'dn't do fer me to be down sick, so I bether have a bit o' tay. Did ye foind the cookies in the jar under the kitchen windy, dear? An' I think I'll warrum a little soup fer Timmy while we do be havin' our tay."

She looked at the boy lying still under the spread, and tiptoed creakingly out. Then the moan broke from the blackened lips. They were all back—the voices that whistled and shouted and hooted in his ears, while the shops

burst out in a frenzy of iron clanging on iron that racked his body in long, shuddering jerks of torture. He could not stand it! He must get to that place on the hill, where the cool bed of leaves waited. He could crawl there somehow if he could only get away before the women came back.

He shoved down the bedclothes, and pulled himself up, but only to reel dizzily, and fall back on the pillows, while the nausea rolled over him, and he sank down, down through the bed. He lay there a long while, and the bed dipped and swayed sickeningly. Then slow tears jerked down over the purple face, and the black lips twitched.

"I can't!" he moaned. "I can't——"

A crash of stove lids from the kitchen startled him, and his eyes turned toward the door. And there he saw the man in gray.

He was a stranger—and yet, in some puzzling way, Timmy felt that he had always known him. He was standing just within the doorway, but somehow he did not fill the room as the others had seemed to do. Instead, the walls of the room faded into the shadows, and it became wide and cool.

Timmy lifted one scrawny hand weakly.

"Say, you'll take me to the woods, won't you?" he whispered contentedly.

The man in gray moved over beside the bed, and Timmy's fever-cracked lips smiled up at the face he could now see more clearly. The face was unsmiling—instead, it was very grave, and the strong, close-set lips looked stern and silent.

The eyes were deep-set, and they looked with a steady, brooding gaze down at the boy. They were eyes that were terribly sad—that seemed to have looked for long centuries upon suffering and weariness, and to have carried the burden of it always in their tired depths. But the face had that in it that drew the boy's soul in immeasurable content and trust, and his own gaze reached out hungrily to a sternness that was to him only strong and just, and a graveness infinitely sweet and unfathomably tender.

Just as a maestro picks up an instrument that has been pitched aside by a rude hand, so this quiet man gathered all the tortured wires of Timmy's being into a slow, strong grasp that stilled their panic. Under the touch of that cool, flexible hand, the twitching limbs grew still.

"Ye'll take me to the hill?" Timmy whispered. "Ye can't hear the shops there, ye know. An' the water just makes a funny little sound, like music, that makes yer head feel sleepy an' good. An' the squirrels don't seem too tired to play, like we do. They're such nice little fellers, the squirrels are."

He moved his head a little, the better to see the man beside him, then gasped suddenly. He was sinking down, down through the bed. But two gray-clad arms slipped around him easily and gently, and the strength of them cradled him securely.

Timmy smiled gratefully up into the face that was now so close to his.

"Thought it had me sure!" he whispered. "It makes me so sick to me stummick, ye know."

The feeling of nausea passed, the pounding grew fainter in his head, and the dull ache of the thin limbs began to die away. A strident rattling came from the kitchen as Mrs. Keenan poked the ashes in the stove. At the sound Timmy quivered, and crept closer into the arms of the man in gray.

"I'm so glad ye came!" The whisper was weary, content. "Ye'll take me to the woods, where the leaves is cool fer a bed. I laid there all day that time me back wuz hurted—an' ye'll stay by me, won't ye? Say, I—luv ye! Ye don't hurt me head or nuthin'. An' ye seem jus' to know 'thout talkin' to a feller——"

The boy threw a bony arm up around the man's neck, and rolled his head into the hollow of the steady shoulder.

"Say, I'm glad ye came!" he murmured drowsily. "Hol' me tighter—yer arms—feel dandy. I—think I—kin go ter—sleep——"

And as the man in gray bent his head and touched the boy's face with his lips, Timmy slept.

A little later when Mrs. Dolan came in with the soup, she stopped very suddenly at the bedside. Timmy was perfectly still—that unmistakable stillness that is like no other. His head was lying comfortably on the pillow, and the clutching fingers had relaxed, and were slightly curled in quiet restfulness. He did not open fever-bright eyes—never again would they open at her voice, or at sound of shop whistle calling aching bones to labor.

Mrs. Dolan dropped the dish on a little table, and raised her arms above her head, where her hands twisted. And then the long, strange "keenings" of the Irish mother mourning her dead went out to the night, rousing the sleeping neighbors to whisper in affright.

But up on the hillside a wraith-gray figure that no human eye could see was carrying a burden. His steps did not bend the grasses or disturb the wild flowers. And soon he paused and laid a tired boy on a soft bed of leaves.

Far out on the horizon "the wolf tail swept the paling east"; a flush of soft-

est pink wavered on the edge of the world, then crept forward, sending rose shadows on the gray draperies of retreating dawn. Little breezes, cooled by the long, sweet night, rippled the wild flowers and the tall, feathery weeds, and wakened a thousand tiny insect voices to fairy hymning.

Then Morning laughed, and swept her diaphanous robes of silver and rose and amber across the eastern sky and up the hill, and touched the boy's face with her glory.

Timmy wakened with a long, long breath of perfect ecstasy. Close to him was the man in gray, and Timmy reached out an eager hand.

"Say, ye won't let me go back?" he breathed.

Over the gravely calm face passed a smile of wonderful tenderness—a smile that comforted and reassured, and that promised all things. And the boy sighed, content.

"Heaven is the vision of fulfilled desire," and Timmy had come into his own.



THE SET OF THE SAIL

FROM whencesoe'er the wind may blow,
It bears the sailor where he'll go;
He trims his sail to suit the breeze
And scuds along with singing glees.

And you, my brother, "borne to woe,"
Can shape life's circumstances so
That every countercurrent bleak
Will push you toward the goal you seek.

WILLIAM ALLEN WOOD.



ISTEN I ELTESSEN HORACE FISH

EVEN at sixty, one can be surprised. Men older than that have been startled, and startled by their own children.

As we went down the steps of the little Second Avenue restaurant, Bobby said to me:

"Please don't be surprised at this place."

We had passed by a row of potted shrubs, across a paved basement way. He preceded me through a rattle-latched doorway, and I found that we were in a low, oblong room, a cheap place spotted with black tables. At the far end, there was a piano, burdened with neatly piled stacks of sheet music.

We seated ourselves upon very hard chairs, at a round table quite far down the narrow room, and a sulky waiter came to Bobby's side, and Bobby ordered something.

I was looking somewhat snobbishly about this wine shop—I had read of such places, but it was disconcerting to me that Bobby and I should be there together, without my knowing why. A certain deference is due to elderly people, especially if they are related to you; and Bobby is my son.

I could not imagine why he had brought me here. I had come unexpectedly to town, and chanced finding him at his rooms. I did find him, and he received me with flattering evidences of pleasure.

"You'll stop with me, of course," he had said, and proceeded to offer me his

lounge, linen that I could not possibly wear, and cigars.

I had intended to go on to my club, and I essayed a protest.

"You are busy doing things, Bobby. There are your clothes laid out. You were going somewhere. I shan't interrupt you, you young cub——"

"You're going to stop here," said Bobby briefly. "I am going out. And if you'll drop alongside, it will be exactly that much pleasanter for me, and for the people I'm calling on."

I am weak where Bobby is concerned, and somewhat inquisitive, too. I found it very much like old times to watch him climbing into his slender afternoon clothes; and I enjoyed seeing him unpack my case, and I enjoyed the way in which he engineered me into a cab, on a round of visits which, he explained, he had long neglected.

It had impressed me fleetingly at the time that my son spoke like an overworked man, something I could not imagine my son to be. It seemed that we would go afterward to dinner, and have a good old-time talk.

And this was where he brought me to dine! And at five in the afternoon!

Yet, though the place was so very foreign, I had to admit that there was a positive homelikeness in it, unyielding as the chairs might be, unlovely as the colors of the walls might seem. Directly above our table, for example, was a horrifying picture, undoubtedly of oil, and presumably painted by hand,

representing a dramatic incident with horses in it. It was very large, and represented also an admirable love of art in the working classes.

And this restaurant of Bobby's had another strange virtue—bright-red wall paper, with a pink design tricked out with gilt spiders. I concluded that it was a Hungarian place.

A trifle guiltily, I glanced back at Bobby, and found, as I had feared, that he was watching me with the amused expression peculiar to him which always betokens a full comprehension of his companion's mental condition, and an enjoyed consciousness that he has the better hand of the situation. Then there followed in his eyes a light even harder to bear—that of remorse.

"I'm very fond of this place," he said apologetically. "It seems—well, my own property, so to speak. I'll tell you more about it by and by."

I always take Bobby seriously when he is serious. I glanced about the place again, and began to like it better. Bobby is my best friend, and it was not for me to cavil or to question.

The waiter returned and put between us two tall, thick glasses of heavy yellow wine. I came to learn that it was Hungarian wine—the very purest of the real Hungarian from the province of California.

A flickering smile came into Bobby's face as he lifted his glass to mine.

"*Isten Eltesen!*" he said.

"Whatever you mean," I answered. "I must take your word for it!"

And with a sigh I started at my long portion of the yellow fluid; and under its gracious influence looked about me again, with a sense of some coming discovery.

Once in every long while in life even a commonplace man discovers something. For instance, I had one day discovered Bobby—very pink, very crinkle-eyed, very, very small. Later, I had discovered suddenly that Bobby's mother was dead.

As if that were not enough, I discovered—very few years afterward, it seemed to me—that Bobby was as tall

as myself—long looking, and thin, and queer. And only a very little later I made two discoveries at once—that I was stout, and that Bobby was married.

This afternoon, our visits had brought before me many faces that were poignant reminders to me of a time in Bobby's life that was happy in my memory.

For a year and a half, I had been much troubled about Bobby. That long ago had been the only time when I was ever seriously angry with him; and that was when he had separated, in a complete and tragic break, from his wife Julia.

I was not totally surprised, so many small things having gone before; and it was none of my business, save that I felt that he might have confided in me about it.

My personal grievance was that they had been, in my judgment, so perfectly matched. Julia had seemed the ideal wife for him. There was no money question; their long childhood acquaintance threw away the thought of infatuation. A lack of purpose in life was, I supposed, the only snag in wait for them.

So far as appearances avail, they were ideal in their initial married life. The tall, and slender, and dark Julia, gravely dignified in her extravagant frocks, had lent herself graciously to their luxurious life.

They were forever darting to the opera, like skating bugs on a pool; and this condition was followed, on Julia's part, by an insincere passion for the Kneisel Quartet; and this delight, in turn, by a series of Monday morning concerts in a hotel.

There came my first serious doubt of Julia's rare intellectual quality. Surely, Monday mornings should be a time set aside, in a spirit of pure duty, for pessimism, hopelessness, and the expression of all ugly tendencies in our characters! I am sure they should not be given over to enjoyment.

And the growing of small quarrels between Bobby and Julia developed until they harbored serious differences in regard to Julia's occupations; for she

had now evolved into suffrage, socialism, meetings at Cooper Union. And in reply to Bobby's violent reproaches, she made reproaches exceedingly calm, based on the fact that he had no work to show for his living. And the end came.

There was a certain selfishness, I am afraid, in my unhappiness at the crash, for my affections had been very few, and I was very fond of Julia—more fond of her, in fact, than of anybody else in the world. Except Bobby; for, exquisite as she might be, I should not be asked to care more for Julia than for him—because I have known Bobby all his life, although he has known me only half of mine.

At this particular moment, in this queer little eating house, Bobby was silent. He was content, apparently, to let me sit, supremely uncomfortable, with my blinking, sixty-year-old eyes appraising the shop.

Facing me, next the piano, was a doorway—leading, I judged, to the kitchen, for household sounds came from that direction: the clanking of pans, the hissing of hot water on cold plates, the scrape of a mop, all mixed with occasional high, very sweet, laughing voices. From through the doorway I caught a glimpse of a stairway.

At the other end, near the entrance door, was a long window with a broad sill for display.

What the window displayed was very little: a wire bird cage, the home of a yellow-and-brown canary; and other than this, and its long, stiff, snow-white curtains, only some posters, whose red-and-black lettering seemed to announce a *bal masqué* in the baffling language of the Hungarians.

One thought, with the persistency of an undercurrent, circled constantly in my mind: "*Why does my son seem at home in such a place?*"

I had but one more section to examine, and here I discovered that directly back of me was a small office, whose partitions of wood and glass surrounded a tall wine counter and enough space beside it for a small desk and an

enormous old gentleman, who was looking at me, from behind his newspaper, out of a round, huge face whose only severity lay in the nose-ensconced spectacles over which he gazed, and in the grandeur of his general size and shape.

I have seldom seen any one so stout, and I received a smile so wide, and a bow so low, that in embarrassment I turned hastily away. I discovered Bobby smiling and bowing to him across our table; and in the reflection of a mirror by the piano, I chanced on a vision of our host warmly shaking hands with himself before his hearth, in an affectionate gesture which, with both elbows, he waved back at Bobby.

Why was my son at home in such a place?

I have had to acknowledge, together with many other prejudiced people of my years, that marriage nowadays is somewhat justly in disrepute. I have only my own case to comfort me as to the great tradition, and the sad instance of Bobby and Julia always brought poignantly to me the memory of Bobby's beautiful mother, who had found death when Bobby found life. I have sometimes wondered why God will not allow people to love each other, and, simultaneously, to—to live.

When I came from my reverie, I realized that I had begun to enjoy seeing Bobby in these genial surroundings; for of all the comfortable elements of the restaurant, Bobby appeared the most comfortable. Yet take pleasure in the fact as I might, his being so was a matter of troubled wonder for me. I forgot that I was his guest, I forgot, in fact, everything except my anxious curiosity to know how he had attained his obvious familiarity here. For there had crept over me a gradual suspicion that something that had to do with his future life was bound up in the life of this incongruous little restaurant.

Bobby's future had been, naturally, a matter of grievous contemplation with me; and, used as I was to biding my time, I found here the atmosphere of something really vital concerning him. There must be, I felt, something vital to account for his pleasure in the place.

The serious, new, elusive quality in his always elusive face bore out my vague forewarning of something to come—something to be sprung upon me, so to speak. A dignified indifference to the whims of a younger generation may be appropriate in a man of sixty—it may almost be a just demand of him. But it is not a pleasant thing to be in the dark at a dinner table.

"Bobby," I said, with sudden determination, "I believe that nature made me only reasonably inquisitive, but may I ask you about one thing? I've just remembered it—why, I don't know. In your disagreement with Julia there was some—or *was* there?—some unpleasant talk about a restaurant—a scene—Can it be that this—"

"Yes," said Bobby simply. "This is the place."

Perhaps I looked as vaguely troubled as I felt, for after a hesitant silence he went on: "It was nothing, father, for vulgar mouths to chatter over. And for that reason, perhaps, it's square enough to tell you that it was not about me, but Julia."

"But——" I ventured, "but——" and stopped. The thought of our darkly beautiful Julia, with her slender, erect height, her delicate, aristocratic air that verged calmly on hauteur, her sensitively nervous hands—to think, in short, of Julia, embroiled in such a place as this, was as difficult for me as to fancy the grotesque circumstance surrounding Bobby.

"Yes, it's hard to credit," smiled Bobby, rather sadly. "The early stages of the mad faddism were hard enough to bear. The suffrage I suffered. The socialism, while it stayed between covers, or the walls of a lecture hall, was well enough if it gave her real pleasure, which I doubted. But seeking it, or seeking to practice it, among the helter-skelter of the East Side, alone at night, was not my notion of a reasonable life—or wife, either. And when I found her cab on that corner, and the lady herself at this table, hobnobbing with a mechanic and a half-drunk Hungarian woman— You can imagine that the place has some few memories for me."

"Tragic ones, I should think, Bobby," I answered sadly. "For if there is one thing I was certainer of than your loving Julia, it was that Julia loved you."

"I'm not so sure," said Bobby slowly. "At any rate, the rest followed. I think you will agree with me that you can't much love a person—that way—without a fundamental sympathy about *life*. And can any one have a fundamental understanding of life without having worked for it? Neither of us had anything to do—and I afterward approved of one thing Julia reproached me with. It was the last thing she flung at me, and Julia's speech can fling, though you didn't often hear it.

"She said: 'My occupations may seem absurd. But shall you say it—you, who have *none*?'"

Was the vehemence in Bobby's voice an imitation of Julia's? Or was it a vehemence, a new quality, of his own?

As I struggled for an answer to these questions, and for some reply to Bobby, I discovered that the huge proprietor was puffing expectantly beside us, his deep respiration seeming to widen and widen, like circles on a pond, above the edge of our table. My most sensitive fellow feeling went out to him, for he reminded me of the discouraging vision that I see in my glass while shaving.

"Popper Gutman," said Bobby, "this is my father."

Popper Gutman shook my hand under a low, round bow.

"Why doesn't the canary sing?" asked Bobby.

Popper Gutman lifted a tragic hand. "It is not him," he said sorrowfully. "Tommy, he eats him last week. He, I buy this morning. Mommer, she let him out for health, and Tommy, he eat him, so quick I do not see."

"Dear—dear!" said Bobby. "Have you punished Tommy?"

Popper Gutman stood back reproachfully.

"Punish Tommy? No. No. No. It was their nature they should kill all that flies, run, or hops!" And Popper Gutman, with a dignified bow to us, was gone, toward the kitchen.

His ponderous journey, however,

reached only the piano, for, contrary to his progress, a sort of caravan was coming through the pantry doorway. It was of three people, and they bore a large framework, which they navigated, with care and much conversation, into the room.

The two young persons who conveyed it in front were the waiter, whose title, "Pashta!" figured largely in the directions, and a smiling, gingham-clad maiden, whose eyes and dimples responded to calls and exclamations of "Rozie!" The third and authoritative laborer, who steered it with one fat hand from the rear, undulating between this clutch and a tall basket of wet lace which she dragged after her, was a human being of astonishing proportions. Her suitability to our host engaged me in contemplation to the effect that she was Mommer Gutman.

Her vast face was very beautiful, and her voice, like Rozie's, was more charming still. Laboriously the three, urged to merit by Popper Gutman, placed the great frame across the tables; and in a babble of contending opinions, and alternating laughs, and angry protestations, they stretched upon it an endless number of wet white curtains from the basket.

Popper Gutman stood aloof, scolding Pashta constantly. Evidently he did not consider that it was Pashta's nature that he tear and rend all that was lace, wash, or curtains. Through the side windows the shimmering sunlight of evening fell in rectangular lines, glittering the snowy fabrics as the pretty Rozie deftly spread them out, under the approving head tones of her wide-spread Mommer Gutman, who loomed, in state, upon a chair, which she completely covered from view.

Their task seemed a subject of much gayety, but I determined soon that the merriment of the Gutman family was not concerned with the stretching of curtains. Whenever she looked at Bobby, Rozie blushed; and when he praised her skill, shouts of mirth arose from the enormous parents, and Rozie hid her face. Some intimate secret hovered over Rozie, and bubbled in the

heaving bosoms of the Gutmans. And I saw that Bobby was in some direct manner party to this secret.

A love affair, either brewed or brewing, was in this place. Not only the chirruping Rozie, and her gigantic parent birds, but the canary seemed to tell of it, for the brown-and-yellow stranger, as the slantwise evening sun crept away from the curtains and struck across his cage, began to sing voluminously, impulsively, as if uncontrollably. Some intangible quality of the whole régime spoke of it. Its domesticity, the actual homeliness of its homeliness, the earnest, simple horror of the great oil painting, were a suggestively perfect background for some humble peasant love tale—perhaps lifted from its humility and painted into higher romance with the tints of glowing fortune, or more glowing caste—

I am not an imaginative person, and that I should suddenly, unreasoningly be one, struck at me as with the startling chill of intuition.

Then I heard Bobby's voice, with a tone of eagerness in it.

"Father, don't you see *anything* in the place? Hasn't it something *real* in it?"

"Tables, and chairs, and something up my son's sleeve," I answered, covering away my fear under the disguise of impatience.

"I've got this much up my sleeve," returned Bobby. "Father, I'm—working."

I stared at him.

"Kindergarten?" I inquired. I spoke with some irony, for I was hard-hearted enough to remember that I had found Bobby at home in the middle of the afternoon.

"No," he said slowly, looking me so fully in the eyes that I knew he was again reading my thought as if I had quoted it, "this is my day off, because I work Sunday. I'm a mechanic."

"A what?"

"A practical mechanic."

This was revelation in a high degree. Bobby's customary humor in exasperating me was not evident. He must mean what he said. But my feeling of mys-

tification did not abate; rather, it was manifolded.

"How much do you get for being a practical mechanic?"

"Six dollars a week. Next week I'll get ten. I've been jumped to a more important job, with a small shift to boss. That's why I've got to work Sunday."

"Do you mean to say," I emitted from my irritated confusion, "that you leave your rooms every morning dressed in overalls, and come back there with a tin pail in the evening?"

"Dear old man," said Bobby, in a tone of infuriating pity, "there are lockers for the men in the humblest foundries."

There was no good excuse for me to feel so angry, but I could not help asking:

"Do you take a cab?"

"When I'm late," said Bobby simply.

Somehow my impatience left me. It rejoiced me to have suddenly learned that Bobby's invariable initiative had at last taken him along some path that must be held sacred by the whole world, whether it brought him anywhere or not.

He went on voluntarily: "Julia was right in some ways. Men ought to work. If they don't have to on account of money, they ought to for the sake of work itself. I've found that out since I began to drop into this place. You can see the value of work in the mere people themselves. They're happy. Don't you think they look so? They all have to work."

"I waked up here. I came in first after the crash, curious, and morbid, and—sore, because Julia had dabbled in it. She was more sincere, I guess, in her modern labor ideas than you and I gave her credit for. At any rate, I came here occasionally and had a glass of wine, and the idea of work got in my brain. And it—it—came about that I decided to take a job."

"There's a lot more back of it, and of all it means to me. I'm not impersonal. There's a personal reason. But I like my job as a workman. I'm glad to sweat for it. Take my word for

that, dear old boy, and sympathize with me in the whole thing. You won't be sorry."

Bobby had never before spoken to me, uninterrupted, to such a length. I caught a glimpse of Mommer Gutman, and the waiter, and Rozie. All three of them were smiling together, and across my dazed senses I suddenly heard their high, sweet, chaffing voices. Some new jest was going forward, and Mommer Gutman reached out her great pink-and-white hand and slapped Rozie's face with more gentleness than I could have put into a kiss.

I no longer asked myself: "Why is my son at home in such a place?" Even my silent questions lay silent, under the second falling of the cold hand that I have named imagination—intuition.

I brought myself back to our conversation with a jerk.

"What you do will always be straight and honorable, Bobby. But, frankly, do you intend to become entirely a part of this life?"

"Did I smoke a pipe upside down in this afternoon's drawing-rooms?" inquired Bobby.

This is a kind of wit I do not like. It leaves one both answered and unsatisfied; and I felt that his contemporary keenness in divining thoughts I did not speak might have been apter this minute, for I knew that my trouble must be showing in my face.

"Bobby," I said, as earnest as he himself had been, "has it ever struck you, as it did me just now, that, perhaps, Julia saw here—saw, and felt, and *enjoyed*—the thing that *you* do? That she was less immersed in its 'socialism,' if it has any, than in its socialness? Less in its 'labor,' which it obviously has, than in its—domesticity? That while she hunted occupation she was really seeking—that? And *found* it? Has that ever occurred to you, son?"

"Yes," said Bobby quietly.

For a time he vouchsafed no more, and I heard only the anxious waiting of my own ears and the lilting scale of Rozie's peasant laughter.

"Though it may have irritated you," he continued, "you must admit that

what I said about the pipe was reasonable. On the other hand"—and that still other hand came coldly back upon my heart—"in this new life I have some mighty fine friends—friends I hope I'll never lose. You'll meet one of them tonight—the chap that got me my job. And if I make good on that job, and show I'm worth it, there's a big happiness waiting for me. Personal happiness. As I asked you, father, won't you—sympathize with me in it all? I've told you; you—won't be sorry."

My helpless silence must have a little disturbed him, for his next words, after a slight hesitation, were almost emphatic.

"All these people work. And if it does nothing else, it teaches them how to play. So I work now, too. Don't imagine I'll be a mechanic very long. But just now it's good enough. It serves the purpose, because—I'm on probation."

"Bobby," I began; but I seemed to have no other sensible word to say, and the mercy of distraction came in a majestic, slowly moving figure that stepped forward through the doorway by the piano. It was leisurely and white, and seemed to possess, even more confidently than Bobby, a sense of proprietorship of the wine shop.

"Allow me," said my son, "to introduce Tommy." Tommy had wandered alongside Bobby's chair, and was rubbing a large neck against his trouser.

I am not very fond of cats, and just now I was not in a happy mood, yet I immediately liked Tommy. After the general plan of the Gutmans family, he was large, and his face was distinctly uncommon. It looked, I may say—like the rest of him—as if two animals had originally been designed in one, so that across the resulting cat a black accident of spots, like the blood of a murdered ink bottle, had been loosed upon his fair groundwork of pure white; and across his pink nose, in particular, was a smudge of black fur that made the glorious one look both rakish and untidy. Bobby stooped forward, making a hoop of his arms, and Tommy, unashamed, leaped courteously through

and came on toward me, combing his hair on my ankle.

By some means, possibly through this animal which, remaining the one beast utterly untamed by man, utterly indifferent to humankind, is yet humanity's symbol of the domestic, I began to feel as if I had been often in the little restaurant. The dull-faced Pashta was again at Bobby's side, and, as he gathered away our glasses, I spoke to him.

"How old is the cat?" I asked.

"Tommy," said Pashta.

"No," I explained carefully; "how old is he?"

"Tommy," he replied again, more clearly. I had sudden inspiration.

"What is his name?" I asked.

"Nine years," said Pashta; and departed, followed by Tommy, to the kitchen.

The front door had rattled; men and women, loudly talking, had entered back of me; white cloths had been spread upon the many tables. Mommer Gutman and Rozie had gone away, and two musicians—doctors, evidently, of piano and violin—had taken places at the end of the low room. Pashta was going about turning on lights, and Bobby, touching me on the arm, was presenting to me a young man called Mr. Bogyar.

Mr. Bogyar seated himself between us, suddenly removing his hat in a deference, I judged, purely to myself. Under the crisp shock of tangerine-colored hair, two childlike, searching, gray-green eyes turned alternately upon Bobby and upon me, as if Mr. Bogyar could not determine which of us deserved the kindlier glances from his pleasant nature—Bobby, in his own admirable person, or I, as Bobby's author.

"Pashta," he called, "three wines on self!" And then, leaning toward me confidently, and putting a broad, freckled hand upon my fingers: "Bobby, he is fine man. He good to me. You hear me? And good workman. Only he need wife. It is cheap."

I was avoiding Bobby's eyes, and as I lifted my glass, I heard it, with a reproach to my forgetfulness, clash against Bobby's and Mr. Bogyar's.

"*Isten Elteszen*?" they said to me, both, and we drank together.

A man's son may be found out from the friends that he makes. "Mr. Bogyar," I said, "what does *Isten Elteszen* mean?"

The glowing young foreigner cast his innocent gray eyes at me with deferential enthusiasm, and, taking a pencil from his waistcoat, drew toward him the soiled dinner card.

"*Isten*," he informed me, writing it, "that mean 'God.' *Elteszen*—'May you have long life.' You see? 'God! May you have long life.'"

Looking at the dirty menu card, with young Mr. Bogyar's careful writing on it, I thought I did see, dimly, perhaps, something of the hale spirit that drenched the toast, and, as we lifted our glasses once more, I strove to drink, inwardly, to Bobby's happiness, whatever that real happiness might be. Through this boylike young man I felt that I understood a little of what *Isten Elteszen* must mean.

The diminutive restaurant was alive about us. Loud foreign voices joked above the lesser, and the harsh jangling sounds of plates and plated silver aided the pianist and his comrade, the fiddler, in beating down the din with music the like of which I do not know. It was experience to hear this kind of music. The raking fiddle and the optimistic piano joined, under the nobly tired fingers of the two wage earners, in a noise as cheerful as a cricket's.

I could not tell what they were playing, though I knew most of the notes that they were playing to play. Probably it was "Pagliacci." Then, suddenly, the melodic gayety ceased, and the tones dropped, swooping, into a tenderer, stranger fabric of tone color. From behind me, and from the table nearest the piano, soft voices took up the harmony that was born in the Hungarian people.

Screams of loud laughter made me turn my head, and I saw that two women, across from us, were striving for Mr. Bogyar's attention. These festive ladies wore, perhaps to counteract the need of hats, a species of

elaborate shopping satchel; and from these they took many cigarettes to eke the pleasure of their wine, which in turn they followed with the indulgence of shrill Hungarian jokes. I gathered that some were about me, because I am portly, and some about Mr. Bogyar, because of Mr. Bogyar's hair.

Mr. Bogyar did not grow indignant. Instead he joined them as they rose to depart, and took them to the door, making their acquaintance on the way. Certainly, I thought in my surprise, Mr. Bogyar was not conventional, even after a peasant fashion. When he returned he laid his hand severely on my arm:

"Those women, you saw them?" I nodded.

"You hear me, what I say them? I say them they were fine peasants, they make fine mothers, and it would be a shame what they are!"

My approbation of our friend returned. Instinctively I raised my glass to him; and as I did so there fled through my mind a vagrant memory of my only thankfulness at the time of Bobby's little drama—a reflective thankfulness that had been, till then, a sadness to me, a disappointment. *Ish—*" I began, and stopped, helpless.

"—*ten Elteszen!*" finished Mr. Bogyar, flashing with a great white smile that glittered among his freckles; then, gravely, earnestly serious once more, he replaced his widespread hand upon my arm.

"So I talk it to Bobby. He should do such. He is fine man, more brains as myself, besides too single."

I stole a look at my son. I had supposed him watching, overhearing, with his remote, silent smile; but, like his mother—like himself for years behind—he was daydreaming, if the dreaming of distant eyes in the lighted din of a restaurant evening may be named so.

A volume of sound, rising, falling, crashing, proclaimed the nobility of music and the benefit of social discussion. The fiddle boy was standing forward in the room, leading, in successive dance rhythms and mournful cadences, a neighborhood tenor who neglected his dessert for the joys of homeland song.

I looked again at Bobby, and it was evident that he could—in the clatter and blare, the glare, and chatter, and hot, heavy smoke struck into hazy gold by the yellow lights—sit dreaming as She, in my youth, had used to do before a great pyre of logs in the maw of the chimney—seeing asphodel in the glowing ashes, and feathery trees in the upward streams of orange-colored sparks, and dancing dryads in the leaping green and lavender of flame.

As I now sat watching Bobby, I had sat watching her—finding the dryads not in the fire, only in her eyes; yet to-night, as if truly imagination had lain in wait to close down my eyes to reality and open them, at a sad sixty, to the colored cloth of fancy, I saw before me a dancing dryad figure, albeit her fairy gown was but of gingham and her waving hair in a braided peasant coil; dancing, circling, half hidden, half framed by the doorway—*Rozie*, like a bubble of the music, half singing, half laughing.

Bobby, too, twisted about on his chair, was watching her; and with her swaying, circling movements, all in one small space, the cold hand seemed to be stroking, feeling my heart. Then both of *Rozie's* hands were seized by hands from behind the door, and, as she strained away with a little gasp, *Pasha's* face bent over hers, and kissed it.

Bobby turned abruptly. His eyes caught Mr. *Bogyar's*, and the two smiled; then they caught mine.

"What—what's the matter?" stammered Bobby. I said nothing. With the lifting of the great weight, I was left dazed; and after a moment's puzzled staring, my son found me out once more, and, with the cruelty of the discoverer, laughed. "You—you thought——" But at the stupid flush that was creeping toward my forehead he ceased, and his smile vanished.

"No, dad, not *Rozie*. The good waiter is that happy one. Your heir is not concerned there—beyond a little of your money to enlarge the dowry. But," he added, and I did not know whether his smile had crept back or not, "there is another servant girl."

The smoky haze that had lifted be-

fore the vision of dancing *Rozie* seemed to fall again. So did my lifting spirit; and as if his quickly gentle disposition sensed this, Mr. *Bogyar* placed his pleading hand again upon my arm. But I did not speak, or even look at him.

Whether laughingly, or gravely, or teasingly had Bobby spoken, I knew that no longer was even "imagination" the name for what had shot through me. No, not even "intuition." Premonition was it. Certainty would do as well. The ring of underlying truthfulness had been in those last words. I did not doubt; I had no doubt to cling to. I did not speak; I had no speech to give. Through the soft-blue cloud I lent my eyes to the only spot that had shown, to my more vital self, any friendliness that night—the pantry doorway.

A young woman was standing there now, looking in at the noisy assemblage. Evidently it was the other servant girl, returning by way of the kitchen from her day out. Hers was a tall, a slender figure. It was even a dignified one; yet nothing would seem to bring it above her humble station unless, perhaps, the intelligent, grave nature of her facial beauty.

She stood poised beyond the doorway, gazing at the back of Bobby's head with an utter wealth of affection—the wealth of it that such a woman of labor can give to the rich man who is not ashamed to work, who is willing to be seen by a companion of his caste in the place where she earns her wages. I understood now, completely. The mist had fallen from before my eyes, and, as inevitably, a different mist gathered in them as I watched the haunting, all-souled gaze from hers that traveled across the threshold where she stood.

It was *Julia*, more lovely, in her tight jacket and black skirt, than I had ever seen her.

She had not known that any one noticed her; but as she moved to go on up the stairs, our eyes met, and a slow color spread, tinting and glorifying her pale cheeks and fair temples as we looked into each other's faces for the first time in two long years.

And in that one searching look my

daughter saw—knowing, as she must, nothing of what had forgone in the long evening—saw as my son, sitting with me through it, had not seen—the trouble that had, struggling, unspeaking, been mine; and came forward very simply, very quietly, to my side.

Mr. Bogyar jumped to his feet; and having given him her hand and a soft, unwounding "good night" that smiled him out, she slipped silently into his chair.

As Bobby did not speak, and I found myself unable, it was her voice that broke the vibrant silence. Her words came very slowly, as if from far off, and amid the delicate, pulsing color of her nobly chiseled face her beautiful, veined eyelids were lowered.

"I was unhappy at first—after I got over being angry. But I was always sure that I had been partly right, at least; and the only real sting in my conscience was that I had hurt—you. Did you ever understand a little? I worried, and wondered, for Bobby is so silent, so very silent; and was it for me to explain and justify to you—to you, about him? I couldn't— And later, such a little while later, though it had seemed long—long—the wonderful new fact came.

"Has Bobby told you anything, even a little? Yes, I know he, has, for when I looked at you from the doorway there

I knew instantly that he had told you both too little and too much, and made you miserable— As for that, perhaps I have been making him miserable for a whole year. But father—oh, I *had* to be sure of that new fact! I had to be as sure of him as I had become of myself. For I have, father, I *have*!

"So much has gone, so much has come! All of *this* that you must have seen—all of that I have in myself, now. I could go about our own house, and make it shine like this. I could wash our own curtains. I could cook—not only this food, but food that we could— I could treat servants decently, too. And for the first time in my life, I like cats. And, father, for—the first time in my life, I—oh, you—father, you understand—"

"Can—can I believe it?" I whispered. "I believe, but I must hear you say it, Julia. It is you—you who have Bobby on probation?"

Hesitant, she looked up at me.

"He—is not on probation," she answered, "any longer."

Even now Bobby did not speak—perhaps because he could not; and trying my voice and finding it steadier, I essayed, with a raised glass that shook a little, "*Isten Eltesen!*"

Even to this toast, Bobby did not answer. But I will never forget the look in my son's eyes.



FOR A SUNDIAL

I MARK thy human years with shadow hand;
Behind, before me lie eternities;
But though I rest not, never have I spanned
The life of love that mocks the centuries.

—ARTHUR WALLACE PEACH.



DIRDS have eyes like glass beads. The hen, for all her countless generations of domestication, still gazes out on the world with an expressionless bead of amber with a black spot in the middle of it—and nothing more. Whether she has just laid the Only Egg in the Universe, and is raising the barn roof with her kaddoodles, or flying before the wind, with the house pup in full pursuit, her eye remains unchanged—an amber bead with a black dot in the middle.

But cranes and ducks and geese are different. Long ago I stood beside a crane lying on a prairie. It had been mortally shot in mid-air. The glance of that savage, tragic orb, glittering malevolently on the curious child who came to watch, still haunts me. So Lucifer might have gazed, with fainting, fiery eye, from hell's depths at a cherub who looked over the rim. And ducks? I once saw a white duck with gray-blue eyes, who looked—upon my word—the living image of my grandfather's miniature, minus the wig. And the quiet, whimsical air of him! I always suspected he had a very good joke on me, though he couldn't be persuaded to tell it.

But geese! Geese have eyes with a soul behind them. One is tempted to ask "Who? Why?" They suffer—they think—perhaps they know.

Something of this I said to the plain

countrywoman who holds the keys to a summer paradise on the side of a breeze-swept hill—a tiny farmhouse set down in a rugged, quiet place that invites one to forget the fretting surge of the great world and draw peace from solitude and the simple things of life.

Eunice Holden wrapped her bare arms in her checked apron—they were warm from the dishwasher—and mused a moment in silence as we sat on the steps. "There's a power o' people," she said, "feel that way about geese." She turned toward me, her pleasant face rosy with the sunset that overflowed the chalice of the hills. "Did I never tell you 'bout the lady that came up here from New York City summer before last?"

I shook my head, tucked my skirts about me, and settled down comfortably for a story.

"Well," Miss Eunice began reminiscently, "she drove up the hill road in one o' them quick, rackety affairs—"

"An automobile?" I prompted joyously, feeling very far away from town.

"Yes, an aut—just what you said. It was a rainy day—not a heavy fall, but a rain that drips out of the low sky quietlike and soaks everything. She ran up the path and tapped at the screen door, and asked for a room—didn't question the price nor nothin'. And when the driver had smoked on

down the wet road she stood at the window and clapped her hands like a child, watchin' him go. She was dressed in a long, pale-gray cloak, and she'd a gray veil wrapped round her hat.

"The first thing she did was to ask me for a fire in the parlor. So I got logs and made one—a good snappin' one. And when the room began to get warm I goes out to see about supper. When I come back she'd shed her gray things, and looked like a butterfly just out of a cocoon. My word! I shaded my eyes a minute, and I says under my breath 'The Scarlet Woman!' Now you'll have seen such frocks in the city, perhaps, and you'll know I'm tellin' the truth. She was dressed in some scarlet, gauzy stuff, so red it burned your eyes; and it clung to her till she looked as tall and slim as a sapling in spring. And her shoulders and bosom were bare, and as white as milk, and she'd big, flashin' red stones in a queer sort of necklace round her neck.

"As she sat there in Grandfather Holden's old chair, she glimmered like a coal of fire. And—will you believe me?—she'd scarlet satin slippers on her feet, and silk stockin's just the color of them. And if her dress was like a coal on fire, her hair was the like of that coal unlighted—shinin' and black. But her eyes!—her eyes were the color of the sea when it swings quiet against the cliffs yonder, and rimmed with long lashes, black like her hair, and black eyebrows that looked like you had streaked them with one of your little paintin' brushes.

"When she saw me starin' at her from the doorway—my mouth wide open, belike—she throwed back her head and laughed. Often and often in the winters since, when the sleighs come jinglin' over the hill, I think of the sound of it; 'twas like bells on a string.

"My clothes are comin' to-morrow," she says. 'I had to run away just as I was.'

"And for all her finery, nothin' would do but she must come into the kitchen

and help me get supper. She tucked up her gauzy skirts, and I couldn't help seein' that she'd slim ankles—like a race horse I once seen at the county fair when I was a young girl.

"I made some huckleberry pancakes, and we'd hot biscuit besides, and bacon and eggs, and citron preserves; and I set a pitcher of fresh milk by her. She was as happy as a child on a holiday. And time and time again somethin' or another I'd say would set her off in peals of laughter—not from rudeness, you understand, but because she felt so light-hearted that the least thing started her. Oh, I don't mind! No doubt I do say things that sounds queer to the city folks—what with not much schoolin' and livin' alone here by myself.

"Well, after we'd washed the dishes I slipped upstairs and hunted out an old linen nightgown that had belonged to Grandmother Meade forty years ago and more. The Meades were tall—all of 'em—not like us Holdens, short an' bunchylike. And I laid it on her bed, almost afraid to offer it to her—it was so plain after her fancy fixin's.

"By and by she got drowsy settin' by the fire. She'd had a long trip, she said. And I bade her good night, and gave her a candle to take up with her, while I stayed behind to set muffins for the mornin'. Suddenly I heard her callin', and ran out in the hall, my hands all over flour. And there she stood at the top of the stairs, holdin' the candle up high, dressed in Grandmother Meade's plain linen nightgown, lookin' like one o' these here marble angels in a graveyard. It draped her beautiful, an' fell all about her little bare feet in folds, and lay on the ground some, tall as she was. I just stood an' looked an' looked. I may say I had doubted her a little in her Scarlet Woman's dress—she looked like Satan's wife!—but in this, with her thick black hair braided down her back in two plaits, and that white gown, she looked good and proper, like a young girl should.

"And as we stood there—she at the top of the stair, like an angel, an' me at the bottom like a mortal—there

came a strange, weird cry like a lost soul in the night. At the sound she flew down to me like she had wings, and grabbed my hand, flour an' all. 'What's that?' she says, her candle drippin' all over the oilcloth.

"Don't be frightened," I says. 'It's only the gray goose. Didn't you never hear one before?'

"No," she says, abruptlike. 'What's the matter with it?'

"She's lost her mate," I answered her.

"Oh, is that all?" says she; and her mouth got a downright ugly, sneerin' look I didn't like. She turned and went up half the length of the stairs. Then midway she looked at me over her shoulder. 'How long ago?' she asks, in that same short way.

"Ten years ago come June," says I.

"She gave me the queerest look that set me puzzlin' till I put out my candle that night, and she went upstairs without another word. I heard her movin' around a long while, even after her room was dark, like she was restless and couldn't sleep. A strange bed affects some folks like that. But I couldn't help thinkin' the gray goose had somewhat to do with it—it's a lonely cry.

"The next day her clothes came in a monstrous big trunk, and she was happy as a child hangin' them up in the clothes press. Once when I went up to redd the room she caught me by the shoulders and began to dance about, draggin' me with her, though of course I just plain walked with my two feet hither and yon, like a church member should.

"I'm free! I'm free!" she kept sayin' over and again, like a child sing-singin' a game.

"At dinner time she leaned across the table, and two little dimples kept comin' and goin' in her cheeks, she was smilin' so. And says she: 'I'm goin' to have company some day this week; my—my brother'—and her long lashes dropped over her eyes till I couldn't see a glint of the blue—'and won't you have some more of those huckleberry pancakes for him? He'd love them.'

"Well, all that afternoon she went flutterin' about the place in a little, short blue skirt and a plain-cut waist, like a sailor's, and—it seemed she must always have a bit of red about her—a scarlet silk necktie that made ends in the wind as she moved about, and a scarlet snood like on her hair. Toward sundown she came runnin' up the hill road and in through the gate with her hands full of red flowers she'd found somewhere.

"I was waitin' on this very step, my table bein' set, and only the beans to take out of the oven, and the hot apple pie to cut, for supper to be ready. The gray goose was eatin' somethin' out of my hand.

"When she saw the bird, the smile died out of her face like the sun was dyin' out of the sky, leavin' a mottle o' gray clouds behind it. And as she stood, the flowers dropped out of her hands. She came quietly and set down by me on the step. And once when the gray goose looked at me out of those wise old eyes of hers, the girl gave a quick breath, and caught my arm.

"By and by the gray goose moved off. I knew where she was goin' well enough. Ever since her mate was killed on the road by one of them—"

"Automobiles," I prompted softly.

"Yes—ever since then she goes to the top of the far field and calls him. Always at sundown, and sometimes after the dark shuts in, and times in the middle of the night. Often, often I hear her, and sometimes—may the Lord forgive me—I say a little word of prayer for her, bird though she is! Doesn't the Good Book tell us our Heavenly Father notes the sparrow? And if so He surely has an eye to a big bird like my poor goose that's suffered so. Where was I?"

"She was sitting beside you when the gray goose started off to the hill," I said.

"Well, by and by the gray goose began to call again. It sounded awful lonesome there in the dusk. When the girl heard it she started, and clung close to me.

"Tell me all about it," she says, in that short way of hers. So then I told her about it, just the plain story like I told you when you asked me. How the poor bird wouldn't eat for days, and kept cryin' and cryin' for her mate, till I couldn't sleep for hearin' her. And how ever since she goes up to the top of the hill nights, and calls and listens, and calls and listens. And how all these years between she'd never take up with a new gander, though many's the time I've tried her. Seems like she can't forget.

"Well, after the last word was out of my mouth, Miss Flibbertygibbet—that's what I called her to myself, meanin' no disrespect; it seemed to suit her so—sat beside me perfectly quiet till I went into the house. She hardly et any supper—just dabbled with her food. After supper she moped round a bit, and presently asked for her candle. Said she was tired, and would go to bed. But, laws sakes, when I shut the doors for the night, after noddin' on the steps half the evenin', she was switchin' about the room like a wave between the rocks. Once I heard her sob and cry. My hand was on the knob to go in. Then thought I: 'If she has her troubles, it's nobody's business.' So I went to bed.

"But long after my light was out I lay listenin' to the beat of her feet on the floor. And it must have wove itself into my very dreams, for I was dreamin' of horses comin' up the road, and of some one tap-tappin' on the door, and all such stuff. And in the middle of a dream, when I was runnin' across the road out o' the way of a couple of prancers, I wakes up with a start, and the cry of the old gray goose ringin' in my ears. And there stood Miss Flibbertygibbet by my bed in a lacy nightgown that looked like a party dress, and a pale-blue satin cloak-like trailin' off her shoulders on the floor.

"Oh," says she, 'there it is again!' And she shook all over like one in a chill. I was that sorry for her! Though I couldn't help noticin' that she was holdin' her candle crooked and

spillin' grease all over the rag rug by my bed.

"Please," she says, in a little, whimpery voice, 'mayn't I stay with you? I'm so lonely!' And with that the big tears began to run down her face.

"So I jumps out of bed and takes the candle out of her hand and puts it on the mantel, and tucks her into my bed, and climbs in after her. But there wasn't much sleep for me the rest of the night. For as we lay there with the candle blinkin' on the mantel-shelf, and the cry of the gray goose in our ears, she began to fire questions at me, sometimes not waitin' for the answers.

"And says she, with a sob that broke in her throat, 'Why did God put faith in the heart of a goose, and leave it out of the heart of a woman?'

"And again: 'It's the life we lead—always in a whirl. Even in our pleasures we are fickle—and that such as *we* should promise to be faithful till death us do part!'

"Then, gettin' up on her elbow, she looked down at me, her thick, dark braids fallin' over her shoulders. 'What would you think,' she asks me, 'of people who only stayed married a few years, after promisin' till death us do part?'

"Think!" I says bluntly. 'People like that are goin' the broad road to hell!'

"Well," she says, noddin' her head with a hard little laugh, 'all our set are bound there, then. There's the Van Bruns,' she says, checkin' them off on her fingers, 'divorced after four years; the Rensells after two; the Silverthorns after only a year and a half.'

"Humph!" says I, scandalized. 'Why did they trouble to get married at all?'

"O-o-oh," says she, 'they *loved* each other *at first*; but—they couldn't keep on. You see,' she says, sittin' up, with her hands clasped round her knees, 'they have new gowns every day, and new things to eat, and they hire clever people to tell them new things to do, and as soon as the first shine of newness is off things they get rid of them. So, then,' says she, droopin' her head

and lookin' a bit ashamed—as well she might—it gets to be the same way with husbands and wives. They get tired seein' each other around, and they send each other to the scrap heap and get new ones.'

"Disgraceful!" says I, short and sharp. And I meant it, too.

"Yes," she says sadly, and her hands began to clasp and unclasp. And presently the tears streamed down again like rain on the lace of her gown. 'Pity us! Pity us!' she sobbed. 'Oh, it hurts—it hurts to be faithless!'

"I don't believe she slept at all that night. I dropped off whiles, and the next thing I knew it was mornin', and the sun in at the window. She had slipped out of bed quietly, not to wake me, and when I looked she was not in her room. But when breakfast was ready for the table, and I was puttin' the pop-overs in a hot napkin on the rack over the stove, in comes Miss Flibbertygibbet. She must have been walkin' in the long, wet grass on the cliffs, for her shoes were soaking, and her blue skirt clung to her knees with the damp. 'Where ever have you been?' I asks her.

"Lettin' the clean mornin' blow through me," she says, tryin' to smile; but I could see she'd had a good, hard cry—she looked drenched with it.

"After breakfast she asked me how to get a telegram to town. So I told her to write it out, and the first one passin' on the road would take it to the station. She flew upstairs, and presently came down with a slip of paper tight in her hand. And as she went down the path to sit on the fence by the road she called back to me over her shoulder: 'I'm goin' home to-day.'

"So, sure enough, after her telegram had gone she dumped her beautiful clothes helter-skelter into her trunk, and sat dreamylike on the step, lookin' down the road. And after we'd had lunch I heard the hoot of one of them rackets things—"

"An automobile," I prompted again.

"—comin' up the hill road. It was a hidjous big scarlet one, and it sizzled

along like a blazin' cinder. At the first sight of it, Miss Flibbertygibbet grabs up her gray hat and cloak, and flies in to me. 'Where shall I hide?' she asks me, catchin' her breath like she was scared to death. 'Some one is comin' that—that I will not see! Tell him—tell him—I have gone!' With that she whips into my kitchen pantry, and pulls the door to, just as I hear the crunch of a man's foot on the gravel outside the door. So when the knock come I went to the door, keepin' the screen shut between.

"There stood a man in a long coat that hung down to his heels. He'd a gray cap with a visor, but he had it on wrong side before, and I couldn't keep my eyes off it, it looked so queer. Belike he'd put it on in a hurry. And where it was pushed back off his forehead he had blond, curly hair that was gettin' gray. I wouldn't wonder if he'd been a right-down handsome man in his day, but now his face had deep lines on it that looked like he was makin' fun of everythin', and his brown eyes looked weary—like an old huntin' dog's. Yet they had a strained, hot look about them, and he kept bitin' his short mustache like he was so nervous he didn't know what to do with himself. And the few minutes he stood there talkin' to me he'd light a cigarette and take a few puffs, and throw it away like it didn't please him, and light another. I must have picked up a dozen after him the next day.

"My good woman," he says, in a soft, husky, drawly voice—and I somehow wondered did he know a good woman when he saw one—I wish to speak to the young lady who is with you.'

"There ain't any lady with me," says I, gettin' round it without fibbin' by sayin' under my breath, 'here at the door.'

"Indeed!" says he, very surprised. 'But there was, I'm sure.'

"She's gone," I says, gettin' out of tellin' a downright untruth by addin' to myself, 'into the pantry.' And may the Lord forgive me for triflin' with His truth; but I felt on a sudden like

a sheep dog standin' with bared teeth before the fold door.

"To my surprise, the man never doubted me. But as he stood there, lightin' cigarettes and puffin' the smoke into my very face, he went off into such a tirade against women as I hope never to hear again. And the smut and swear words that poured out of him was like black smoke out of a chimney. As he turned to leave, the gray goose cried out from the hill field. He started as if a pebble had hit him. 'What the devil is that?' says he. 'My gray goose,' I says, more soft spoken than I felt.

"He turned on his heel—I could see the mark in the gravel next day—and scowled at me over his shoulder. 'I'd wring its damned neck if it was mine!' he snarled.

"I watched him go down the path to the gate, and climb into his wagon. I heard him shout somethin' to the driver, and then they were off down the hill, with the road dust risin' behind them in a cloud.

"When I went back to the kitchen, Miss Flibbertygibbet was still crouchin' in the closet by the flour barrel. 'Has he gone?' she asks me, in a whisper, though in truth she had heard every word he said—smut and all—and knew he'd gone. When she came out, she was shakin' like one in an ague, and her teeth chatterin', though her cheeks were burnin' and her eyes black with excitement. I brewed her some ginger tea, and made her sit by the stove and drink it down. But she gave me no explanation, and I asked none.

"All that afternoon she kept runnin' to the door to look down the road. And along about sundown I heard a hoot or two, and, thinkin' I, 'It's the wolf back again.' But when I shook my hands out of the dishwater and went to the step, there was a man comin' up the path—not the one that had been there before—and Miss Flibbertygibbet had run down to meet him. As I watched, he took her in his arms, and dropped kisses on her face like

petals fallin' out of an apple tree on a day when the wind stirs.

"I didn't like to watch, so I went in to my dishes again. As I wiped the last of them, and hung the pan up on the wall, in they walks, the two of them, hand in hand, like a couple of children. And he makes me a bow like I'd been a duchess.

" 'Miss Eunice,' says he, 'I hear you have been very good to my wife.' He said more, but I lost it, lookin' up into his face and thinkin' what dependable gray eyes he had, and what a nice smile.

"And then nothin' would do, after she'd got her cloak and hat on, but he must sit down on the step a while and hear the gray goose call. It seemed she had told him all about it. So they sat there, very still, as if 'twas a thrush was goin' to sing for them, and not a forlorn old goose. So presently it came—that queer, sorrowful call. And at the sound the tears poured out of her eyes, and he wiped them away with his handkerchief, his arm about her, and she all snuggled up against him.

"By and by he says to her: 'It's time to go, dear.' And they got up off the step, and said good-by, and faded off into the dark like a couple of ghosts. Down on the road I could hear their wagon sputter a minute or two in the fits them things have before they get started—and they were gone. But every Christmas since I get a letter with an envelope inside marked 'For the gray goose.'"

"Money?" I asked.

Miss Eunice nodded.

"But what can I get for the gray goose?" she demanded. "She has a warm barn to sleep in, the fields to roam about, and plenty to eat. The one thing she wants, all the gold in the world can't buy for her. What would you do with the money?" asked the little old maid curiously.

"I would dole it out to unhappy people," I said; "hungry people, cold people, lonely people—in the name of the gray goose."



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

A FIRST NIGHTER

AMONG the dramatic excitements of the month are "Romance," by Edward Sheldon, "The Five Frankforters"—adapted from the German—and the opening of the new Princess Theater, where the aim is the establishment of such entertainment as is served to Parisian habitués of The Grand Guignol.

For unadulterated delight and a lasting sweetness, "The Five Frankforters" wins the greatest charm and wins the palm.

"The Five Frankforters" is based, we are told, on the history of the rise of the Rothschilds; if so, the much-discussed episode of the first Rothschild's brilliant, if hardly humanitarian, manipulation of the false news of Wellington's defeat at Waterloo is omitted—though a telling scene might have been made of it.

The play opens in the simple, atmospheric, spotlessly neat home of *Frau Gudula*, the mother of the "Big Five." It is evidently situated in an alley. We learn later that the place is called "Jew's Lane." It is the old Hebrew quarter of Frankfort. Here *Frau Gudula* lived with the father of the Five, and helped him in his rise from poverty and the peddler's pack to wealth and local honor.

From this simple home the sons went forth to extend that honor and wealth from capital to capital over the world.

One son is dead, and *his son, Jacob*, takes his place.

When the play begins, we hear that the Five are to arrive this day for a consultation, summoned hither by *Solomon*, of Vienna, who is the leading power among the brothers, though not the eldest. It is their invariable rule to meet for all important discussions in their old home, "the lucky house." There all decisions are made, the mother always being present to give her counsel. It is a matter of both sentiment and superstition.

The central character, be it known at once, is the mother. She is played by Mathilde Cottrelly, one of our few supreme portrait painters in the histrionic art. The rôle does not compass any large things—in fact, that is perhaps the only criticism one feels inclined to pass upon the play—namely, that there is a sense of waiting for something that never comes. Yet even that criticism is made reluctantly, because of the enjoyment in the quaint pictures, the humorous characteristics of the Five, the charming dress, and the dainty, lavender-scented sentiments of the story.

Jacob, the grandson, is the first to arrive. He is young and musical and romantic, besides being the firm's representative in Paris, and, we are led to understand, shrewd enough for the post.

Presently in comes *Anselm*, the eldest son, and the local light. He is very

portly, very well-lined, and never without his appetite; a genial, fat soul, with the racial trait of vanity prominently in evidence.

There is a little happy converse among the three—mother, son, and grandson—in which we learn something about the rise of the Five. There are reminiscences of past snubbings and jeers, capped by *Anselm's* words:

"And only yesterday the landgraf said to me: 'Anselm, nurse your appetite, grow fat. I want the space to pin another medal on you.'"

This rôle is perfectly visualized by Edward Emery; all the usual mannerisms and modes of this player being suited to the part.

Nathan, from London, *Carl*, from Naples, and *Solomon*, from Vienna, complete the family circle. They are sufficiently well played by Frank Goldsmith, Frank Losee, and John Sainpolis.

Solomon's news is that the emperor has conferred nobility upon them, elevating every member of the family to the rank of baron. He hands the royal paper to his simple old mother, addressing her as "baroness."

It is a pretty and touching moment, made so by the genuine art of Madame Cottrelly. Very beautifully and truly she combines in her playing of the scene the tender, proud joy of the mother for her sons' achievement—although the cost in golden crowns is somewhat staggering—and the honor to the family, with the pride of race, the pride in this removal by the emperor of an unjust stigma on her nation. All this is conveyed very simply, always within the character of a humble old Hebrew woman, yet with a touch of dignity and more—a touch of Deuteronomy—that gives to the scene largeness and profundity.

It remains for the sons to revel in vanity, plump *Anselm's* childishly proud: "I am a baron!"—much repeated—being particularly joyous to the audience. *Frau Gudula* makes some pertinent remarks on conceit which serve to reduce the general headiness. This little family scene is really delight-

ful. It holds the spectator in close, warm sympathy.

Solomon, the dictator, tells his mother that now she must leave Jew's Lane, and live in a fine house in a select part of the city, and make her title daily observed in more important quarters. She puts the quietus on that suggestion instantly.

"Luck might desert the family if I got proud and left my old home. This has been a lucky house."

Anselm says: "Once I bought mother a house, and put everything in it that I thought she ought to like; and she wouldn't even look at it."

Now *Solomon* brings forth his real business. *Gustavus*, reigning Duke of Taunus, wants an immense sum of money at once. The duke is young, charming, and a spendthrift. He must have the money. *Solomon* tells the family that he means to lend—or give—the money on the condition that the duke marries his daughter, *Charlotte*.

Frau Gudula dissents strongly, and leaves the council. Young *Jacob* also dissents, for he is in love with *Charlotte*; but the majority rules, and so pretty, young *Charlotte's* fate is apparently sealed.

This scene brings out vanity and the bargaining instinct in their clearest and least pleasing light. The author has stuck true to racial traits in all his character drawing, of Gentile and Jew alike.

Act II. takes place in the duke's garden. The gay and gallant and very careless young *Gustavus* is excellently played by Edward Mackay, who gave such a good account of himself as *Laertes* earlier in the season.

A visiting prince, possessing the rank, the age, and the income—not to mention the wit—to deliver the perfect snub to the new-made barons, is seen in the person of Henry Stephenson, than whom—in a certain variety of parts—we have borrowed no better actor from London.

To make the money transaction an easier matter, the Five have been invited to luncheon with the duke. *Charlotte* and the grandmother also are ex-

pected, but only *Charlotte* comes, *Frau Gudula* remaining fixed in her determination not to countenance this shrewd bargain in flesh and blood.

There is charm in this act, if less action even than in the first. The drawing of the characters is so excellent, and the contrasting of Gentile aristocrat with Jewish financier is so deftly done, that there is almost sufficient compensation for the lack of incident. The bargain is offered to the young duke, and, since his obligations compel him, he accepts.

Act III. shows us *Frau Gudula's* house again on the next day. Here young *Jacob* breaks bounds, and tells *Charlotte* what has been decided upon. His racial antipathy to mixed marriage is nicely heightened by his own romantic leanings toward his fair cousin, whom, having once seen, he loves forever.

This is a really charming touch of romanticism, this frank offering to us of love at first sight by a playwright who is modern, even if the lovers themselves are of the early Victorian period. Our modern dramatists are too much given to depicting men and women who start an ethical discussion when they meet—or a gang of blackmailers; they start something certainly, but it is seldom love. That is strange, when you consider it, because love is still popular outside the theater, more so even than ethics or crime. Heaven bless mere men and women, and keep them primitive for a long time! America will produce a dramatist from among them yet—when this brief, dark hour of fads, theories, and Strindberg is past.

To return to "The Frankforters." The duke comes to make formal application for *Charlotte's* hand. He also brings medals and ribbons of a certain order of his household. As he pins one on the plump *Anselm*—who becomes at once as vain and childish as a Kafir with a gift of beads—he says:

"This is usually bestowed for valor on the field. Therefore I choose this one, for I can think of no braver act than lending me money."

Just before this incident of the med-

als, however, the *Prince of Agorda*—played by Mr. Stephenson—has called, and, in a few lines of cutting irony, has removed his account from the Five's bank. "Not wishing," he says, "to profit unfairly through a business connection with any relatives—however distant." As he departs, *Nathan* remarks bluntly:

"If all the reigning princes are going to remove their accounts because of our alliance with the duke, we might as well shut up shop now."

Charlotte refuses the duke in a capital little speech, the gist of which is in the lines about the portraits in the gallery, who, she says, would look down on her in cold anger, and say:

"Go away, you poor, awkward little nobody. You have come here a hundred years too soon!"

Solomon apologizes to the duke for "this outburst," and says that the young baroness will fulfill her part.

"In this house," he says weightily, "the children obey the parents."

"Is that so?" demands his mother, rising with a fine dignity and verve. "Then, my son, *you obey me!*" And she proceeds to put an end to the barter of little *Charlotte*—much to the amusement of the young duke, until he realizes that his financial predicament is as bad as ever; worse, indeed, for the money has been sent to his castle, and is already partly distributed. The Five inform him that they never take back their signature.

"Oh, your highness, do not be distressed," the mother says, the shrewd twinkle in her eyes. "If I know my sons—and I *do* know them—they will not be the losers!"

After the duke's departure, there is an amusing scene between *Solomon* and his daughter, in which she finally confesses her love for *Jacob*. *Solomon's* sense of smart business makes him appreciate what he thinks is *Jacob's* cleverness. He looks with mixed feelings at the diamond necklace he gave his daughter just before the duke's arrival, and says:

"So I have spent all my effort, and a fortune, for my own nephew!"

The mother draws a stool beside her chair, and beckons him. He sulks back at first, but finally obeys, and sits there at her knees; and she consoles him as a mother may, while maternal sympathy for her boy's disappointed ambition and hurt vanity vies, in her mercurial play of feature, with the Oriental's joy in the spectacle of the bargainer overreached. It is an unctuous and delicious final picture.

It is rather a "Camille" story that Edward Sheldon has put into his play "Romance." An elderly bishop refuses his sanction to his nephew's marriage with an actress. Left alone, the bishop sleeps and dreams—the play. It is his own youth, when, as a young parson, he, *John*, stormed a beautiful, famous, and sometimes virtuous prima donna, and in the end was forced by her error and sacrifice to leave her utterly, and—become a bishop. In the last scene he wakes, scans the evening paper, and there reads of the death, in Italy, of this very famous prima donna.

The bishop is played by William Courtenay, and the prima donna by Doris Keene. Granting all the sentimental grip of the play, one feels that the story is too trite for the title of "Romance." Such a title demands such a story as Joseph Conrad wrote in his wonderful book named "Romance."

The prize for brilliant and versatile acting this season goes to Amelia Gardner, one of the best, as well as the best known, of our nonstars. In the Greek, Shakesperian, and very modern French of Brieux, Miss Gardner apparently proved that her temperamental grasp of character and period is unlimited. As the queen in "Hamlet," she made a lasting impression. She was everything that no queen we have ever seen has been—viz., a real excuse for the murder of the elder Hamlet by *Claudius*. She was beautiful, wholly and brilliantly Norse in her appearance and her dress; she was majestic, yet soft, as a woman inured to royalty, yet with a sensuous, vacillating nature that made

her dignity only that of station, not of womanhood.

Her free, melodious voice and distinct, unaffected utterance were a joy to the ear. Her reading was clear in revealing the character, and in the closet scene she disclosed evidences of emotional force and tragic power that her other rôles on Broadway had given her no opportunity even to suggest. Her wonderful figure, and few simple poses and gestures, made one think of perfect sculpture in action.

As *Jocasta*, in "Edipus Rex," Miss Gardner gave us a royal and classic lady of another type, place, and period, and presented her with equal success. Her *Portia* had warm, lightsome humor and charm in the comedy moments, and a young, wistful, yearning loveliness in the casket scene. Her success in all these parts was helped not a little by original and exquisite costumes.

It is too early to say whether New York's Grand Guignol—the Princess Theater—is a success or not as entertainment. The house is pretty, and comfortably seats three hundred persons. It is, however, no rival in beauty, or other respects, of Mr. Ames' Little Theater.

A word should be said in regard to Mr. Ames' munificent offer of ten thousand dollars for the best play by a resident of America received before August 15th. The play may deal with any subject and period, and must be a full evening's entertainment. No musical comedies will be considered. Mr. Ames will pay the ten-thousand-dollar prize as advance royalty at ten per cent. After the play has earned that amount of royalty, he will pay eight per cent. Plays must be submitted anonymously, with sealed envelopes containing the real name and address of the author, with the name of the play and the author's pseudonym on the outside of the envelope.

It is a splendidly generous offer, and should call out the best that American dramatists can do.

THE VAGRANT STRAIN

By Charlton Lawrence Edholm

THERE'S a vagrant in the best of us,
Gypsy, Arab, strolling player;
However straight the rest of us
(Formal graybeards, growing grayer),
That vagabond makes jest of us,
"Good dogs! Gay dogs once; none gayer!

"You sailed the seas, you hit the trail—
Sahara to the Arctic floe;
You found your errands where you'd go.
To quench a quenchless thirst for wonder
You sought the Holy Tomb, the Grail;
Because you *had* to sail, you'd sail
For Golden Fleece—or other plunder."

There's a tang o' salt in most of us,
And that is why we go a-seeking.
Old Norman blood's a boast of us;
Yea, berserk and the sea-whelped viking
Make mock at tailored host of us
Who thrill at oars in oarlocks creaking.

We sailed the seas, we hit the trail—
Saraha to the Arctic floe,
And found strange loves where'er we'd go.
To quench our quenchless thirst of wonder
We fought at Troy town, sought the Grail;
Because we *had* to sail, we'd sail
For Golden Fleece—or other plunder.

Ah, there's fodder, crib, and stall for us
(Banker's cage or stall of trader),
Yet the errant strain's in all of us,
Kilted Scot or mailed crusader,
And it answers to the Call in us,
Sea tramp, cow-punch, khaki raider!

We'll sail the seas, we'll hit the trail,
Sahara to the Arctic floe.
Where kisses bloom, sure there we'll go,
To quench our quenchless thirst of wonder.
We'll find the Fount of Youth, the Grail;
We've *got* to sail, and so let's sail
For Golden Fleece—or any plunder!



FOR BOOK LOVERS

SOMETHING over a year ago, H. G. Wells published a very remarkable novel, perhaps the biggest he ever wrote, which he called "The New Machiavelli." It was the story of a distinguished English statesman who was exiled and his career ruined because of his indiscretions with a woman.

Little, Brown & Co. have just published a story by E. Phillips Oppenheim, called "The Mischief Maker," on precisely the same theme.

But whereas Mr. Wells' book was a minute analysis of character, a painstaking psychological autobiography almost, Mr. Oppenheim has relied on his skill as a story-teller, a weaver of plot.

Sir Julian Portel is really the victim of the ambition of another man, who wants his place, and of the latter's wife. Actually, he is betrayed by his affection for an old playmate. Innocent though he is, the evidence in the case forces him to resign and go abroad. In Paris he encounters the Toymaker of Leipzig, who is in fact the German chancellor, masquerading as a mere pleasure seeker. Hating England, and fearing Portel as the only man capable of checking German aggression in Europe, he undertakes to remove the latter from the field of European politics.

Portel, however, with the aid of loyal friends, discovers ways of serving his country and defeating the German chancellor's designs.

The book is full of adventure and intrigue, and to add spice and flavor to the tale the American wife of the chancellor and the daughter of an English duke are made to play active and mysterious parts in the rehabilitation of Sir Julian.

Like all of Mr. Oppenheim's books, it is a thoroughly good story, told by one who understands the art of suspense.



In "The Isle of Life," published by Charles Scribner's Sons, Stephen French Whitman has written a book that is a study of character and society—Roman society—rather than a story.

For the purposes of this study he has taken a type of man more or less familiar in fiction, and laid the scene in modern Rome.

Sebastian Maure is an American novelist, a man of powerful physique, strong passions, selfish, arrogant, regardless of the rights of others, utterly without morals, but withal a man of intellect. It is only his strength that saves him from being as much of a degenerate as his Roman associates.

Of course, such a character as this gives promises of many complications of various sorts, particularly in a story of adventure, or one in which a woman figures. "The Isle of Life" is not an adventure story, hence the importance of the woman. She is introduced here as Ghirlaine Bellamy—a compatriot of Maure's in spite of her name. It is because of her name—to a very considerable extent, at least, we cannot help believing—that she makes a rather ineffective heroine. If she were a Dorothy, or a Mary, or a Jane, we are quite certain that the author's own idea of her would have been more human.

Such as she is, however, she is an immense influence in the life of Sebastian Maure, and finally succeeds in taming him; and by the same act

changes her feeling of intense repulsion for him into a love just as intense.

Another character of some interest is Ernesto Sangallo, a young Italian novelist, in many respects the antithesis of Maure.

The book has a certain interest as a study, but it is doubtful if it will command attention as a story.



Harry Leon Wilson's new book, "Bunker Bean," published by Doubleday, Page & Co., is probably the best he has written, with the possible exception of "The Boss of Little Arcady."

It is good, because, for one reason, Mr. Wilson's only purpose in writing it was to tell an entertaining yarn. And in doing that, by following his own fancy wherever it led, he has given us three hundred pages of whimsical humor of the most refreshing kind.

The book is really a piece of characterization, of the most searching and analytical kind, of Bunker Bean, the young stenographer, of his employer, the multimillionaire, Breede, and the latter's daughter, the "flapper." In spite of the fact that conservative judges estimate Breede's fortune at a round hundred million, Bunker Bean, with a salary of thirty dollars a week, pities the rich man because he is not an "advanced dresser." "Poor old Breede could never learn to *look* like anybody." Bean stands in much greater awe of Bulger, the flashy clerk in Breede's office, than he does of the captain of industry.

His imagination, with respect to Breede, is stirred only when he hears him called "a Napoleon of finance." And when, after having read all there is to be read about Napoleon, he accidentally runs across Madame Wanda, the fortune teller, and becomes acquainted with the mysteries of reincarnation, it is easy for that lady to convince him that he has been Napoleon. From that it is easy enough for him to believe that his soul has previously tenanted the body of a Pharaoh.

With such convictions, his rise to a

position of equality with his employer is inevitable, of course. The first step toward this is taken in the democratic atmosphere of a big-league baseball game which he attends with Breede and the flapper. And, as in all other experiences of life, after the first step, everything else is easy.



Presumably we may look forward, with what serenity we have at our command, to a procession of novels having as their themes one phase or another of the so-called white-slave traffic. One reason for welcoming such books is the prospect they give us of having an unpleasant episode finished and out of the way, for it is likely that, so far as fiction is concerned, it is a fad that will sooner or later wear itself out.

Some time ago a book called "The House of Bondage" was published, and its authors were highly commended—in the absence of any other reason for commendation—for their courageous plain speaking.

Another book on the same theme has just been published by Dodd, Mead & Co., called "My Little Sister," by Elizabeth Robins. It is a distressing tale, made all the more so by the assurance that is given by the author that the conditions which are described are actualities, even though the characters are purely imaginary. Such a statement can only have the effect of intensifying the poignancy of interest in the story which might have been deep enough without it.

The principal objection to novels of this character is that they are not written primarily to tell a story.



Another of Louis Joseph Vance's adventure stories has been published by Little, Brown & Co. The notable thing about "The Day of Days" is that the action of the three hundred pages takes place between eleven minutes past eleven Saturday night and sixteen minutes to ten Sunday morning—ten hours

and thirty-five minutes—and all in New York. So the author is entitled to credit for his concentration of the "unities of time and place."

The hero is a young man, a clerk with a firm dealing in "hides and skins" in the region of New York known as "the Swamp." He prefers to be known as P. Sybarite, because Percival, his Christian name, is offensive to him. He is a college graduate in reduced circumstances—the stuff that fictional heroes are made of—the heroine, a young heiress, masquerading as a sales-lady in a department store to escape the undesired attentions of the wicked trustee of her estate and his profligate son.

P. Sybarite's adventures begin with a theater party made up of some of his fellow boarders in a Thirty-eighth Street boarding house, including the heiress, and grow out of the attempt of the wicked trustee to get possession of his ward.

P. Sybarite follows her, and his path leads him through a Tenderloin gambling den, a flat occupied by a feminine beauty of doubtful reputation, a ball given by one of the Four Hundred, a notorious hotel frequented by denizens of the underworld, and finally to a garage in West Forty-third Street, where the climax comes in a battle with revolvers.

By this time P. Sybarite is thoroughly at peace with himself and the world, so much so that he is at last willing to be called Percival. It is all very exciting and melodramatic.



"Sally Castleton, Southerner," is a Civil War story, written by Crittenden Marriott, and published by the J. B. Lippincott Company.

It is the old, old story of the clash between love and duty—the theme that has been made the excuse for innumerable Civil War stories, to say nothing of other stories of all the wars of history.

The handsome, dashing Northern spy and the young, beautiful Southern sym-

pathizer are the familiar characters; and the spy within the enemy's lines, threatened at every turn with discovery, the young girl tortured with fear for her lover, and her loyalty to the "Cause" supply the well-known incidents and complications.

If only the Northern sympathizers in Richmond who had been supplying information to the authorities in Washington had succeeded in keeping up communication, Frank Radcliffe would not have been sent to the Confederate capital in disguise; he would not have met Sally Castleton in her home on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains; he would not have escorted her and her sister to Richmond and fallen in love with her and she with him on the way; and none of the other things would have happened as they did.

The story, in spite of the fact that it is a third longer than its substance justifies, would be fairly good if it had not been told so many times before. It will find readers, if at all, among those unfamiliar with Civil War fiction.



Important New Books

"The Heart of the Hills," John Fox, junior; Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Vanishing Points," Alice Brown; Macmillan Co.

"American Nobility," Pierre de Coulevain; E. P. Dutton & Co.

"The Weaker Vessel," E. F. Benson; Dodd, Mead & Co.

"The Gay Rebellion," Robert W. Chambers; D. Appleton & Co.

"The Case of Jennie Brice," Mary Roberts Rinehart; Bobbs-Merrill Co.

"The Life Mask," by the author of "M. L. G."; F. A. Stokes Co.

"My Friend's Book," Anatole France; John Lane Co.

"The Poisoned Pen," Arthur B. Reeve; Dodd, Mead & Co.

"The Amateur Gentleman," Jeffery Farnol; Little, Brown & Co.

"The Bishop's Purse," Cleveland Moffett; D. Appleton & Co.

"The Mating of Lydia," Mrs. Humphry Ward; Doubleday, Page & Co.

"Tackling Matrimony," George Lee Burton; Harper & Bros.

"The Makeshift Marriage," Mrs. Baillie Reynolds; George H. Doran Co.

"The Love of Prosperity," Maurice Hewlett; Charles Scribner's Sons.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

VERSE in magazines may be divided into two general classes of merit: that which an editor considers good enough to print, and that which an editor considers too good not to print. Christian Gauss' "Francois Villon," in this number of AINSLEE's, falls into the latter class. No character in literary history exerts a stronger fascination, perhaps, than that fifteenth-century vagabond, Villon—thief, libertine, cutthroat, and, withal, father of modern French poetry. Gauss gives us a vivid picture of the strange combination of villainy, remorse, braggadocio, cowardice, and poetic spirit characteristic of Villon's whole career. It is a portrait worthy, in our opinion, of a place beside Robert Louis Stevenson's "A Lodging for the Night."

HAS it got a happy ending, or does the hero die?"

"Yes," would usually seem an absurd answer to this often-asked question; but in the case of two contributions to the present AINSLEE's, it applies perfectly. Ethelyn Leslie Huston's very original story of "The Man in Gray" certainly has a happy ending, and the character who has won the reader's sympathy does die. The same is true in Richard le Gallienne's beautiful tale of "The Rose that Came Every Morning."

"The Gray Goose" is another story that upsets some of our time-honored notions. You have heard of the old dorky, who, after gazing contemplatively at a pig feeding, exclaimed: "Hmph! Marse Adam suhtainly knew his business when he named hawks; fo' dey sho' is hawks!" After reading Mr. Hilton-Turvey's story, we feel that Adam was less happy in his choice of a name for geese; it seems that they are really not such geese as many of us have always supposed. In this country, where, statisticians tell us, one out of every ten marriages reaches the divorce court, such constancy as is attributed to the gray goose is decidedly refreshing.

Two other stories in this number have an illuminating bearing upon this important matter of unhappy marriages. "Isten Eltesen," by Horace Fish, discloses the reason for much modern "incompatibility of temper," for which neither husband nor wife is consciously at fault. Thomas Addison, in his powerful story of "The Other Woman," deals with more tangible marital problems. Mr. Addison is aware, by the way, that this title has done service before, but he could think of none other that would be so apt in this case, and at the same time contrast so well with the name of a companion story that he is now at work upon—"The Other Man."

While both "Isten Eltesen" and "The Other Woman," like all stories in AINSLEE's, are printed primarily because we consider them entertaining, we think you will agree with us that they incidentally present certain present-day problems and their solutions more tellingly than any number of pages of lifeless statements, statistics, and conclusions.

MRS. WILSON WOODROW contributes the complete novel to the July number. It is an unusual story of love and mystery, with most of the action taking place in a well-known hotel just outside of New York. It is called "The Mystery of the Pink Pieces."

We are gratified, though not surprised, that Joseph Ernest's adventuresome hero, with his daring, his naïve braggadocio, and his little affairs of the heart, should have so promptly swaggered his way into your affections. What his next escapade will be we cannot say; we only know that it will be entertaining. He has an air, that Jules Lacroix!

From your letters we know that Nalbro Bartley's Philippine hero, Caldý, has been on furlough from AINSLEE's as long as you can possibly spare him. We are glad to announce that next month you will find him back on

duty in a good strong story called "The Water Cure."

Ethel Train, author of "Son," contributes to the coming issue another of her delightful stories of child life. In our opinion, "The Girl Whose Room was Not in Order" makes an even stronger appeal than did "The Star Child," in March AINSLEE'S.



ONE story, which we consider ourselves particularly fortunate in being able to give you in this coming number, was first sent to another magazine. In rejecting it, the editor wrote to the author's agent as follows:

"It is with great regret that I return this story, 'A Fa,' written under the mysterious name of Andrul. I do not know who wrote it, but whoever did certainly did a very skillful and beautiful piece of work. For us this story, as is obvious on the face of it, is more or less of a problem. We should hesitate some time before we presented it to our readers. But the story was so beautifully done, and I was so impressed by it, that I had it read by almost every editor here, and it was only after . . . I earnestly hope to see the story printed here in America."

We are anxious for you to read "A Fa," because we, too, consider it "a very skillful and beautiful piece of work." And when you have read it, we are curious to know if any one of you can tell us why any magazine should hesitate to present it to its readers. Needless to say, since we intend to print the story, we ourselves can see no reason. For AINSLEE'S, without being prudish, has always felt that the writer who offends the proprieties does so in most cases because he lacks the wit and skill to attract attention to his work by legitimate means. As Richard Steele, in *The Spectator*, puts it: "Dullness is the parent of indecency."

BONNIE R. GINGER has been making a name for herself as a writer with the true humorist's insight into human nature. Her first contribution to AINSLEE'S, "The Dumb Broot Boob," is the story of a boy who worked in a Bowery bird-and-animal store. Miss Ginger has the knack of showing you interesting little details of life without stopping her narrative to point them out.

George Weston, author of "Touchstone," in this number, gives us another fanciful tale for July; Helen Baker Parker, whose "Nellie" you have just read, contributes an equally significant little story; I. A. R. Wylie, well known to AINSLEE'S readers through her novelettes and short stories, has made a strong tale out of a woman's struggle for happiness; and Anna Alice Chapin's fascinating Pippa Carpenter, "The Woman With a Past," continues on her alluring way.



THE art of writing 'detestable fiction,' Edgar Saltus tells us, "is one to which all novelists aspire and few attain. Yet the secret of it is simple. It consists in pleasing the ladies. It is the ladies who are the arbiters of such elegancies as publishers produce. That is quite as it should be. Literature, which was once a battlefield, is now a department store. In it a writer no longer pinks a rival; he provides assortments of chiffons."

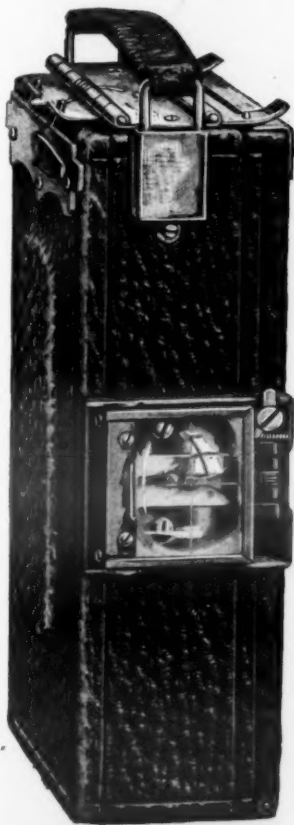
Mr. Saltus treats of the subject at length in a brilliant essay for the July AINSLEE'S entitled "Pleasing the Ladies." We should hazard the opinion that ladies will find this contribution more amusing than pleasing, were it not so unsafe to generalize. For, Mr. Saltus informs us "women are all alike in this respect—they are every one of them different."

"Pleasing the Ladies" adds just the proper pinch of seasoning to a number of exceptionally entertaining fiction.



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Next Year's Cars

By R. E. Olds, Designer

All men can see that these are some features which next year's cars must have.

Reo the Fifth is the only car in its class which offers them all *this* year.

Left Drive

The leading cars this year have left-side drive. You know that all cars must follow.

The delay on some cars is simply due to the cost of changing old-style models.

The laws in Europe compel the driver to sit close to the cars he passes. And he sits there now in the best cars built in America.

Reo the Fifth has this left-side drive. More than that, it has a single-rod center control.

All the gear shifting is done by moving this rod only three inches in each of four directions.

There are no side levers to block one front door. There are no center levers to block entrance at

right. Both brakes are operated by foot pedals. So the Reo driver is never forced to dismount in the street.

Another year, cars with levers in the way will hardly be considered.

Big Tires

Skimpy tires are also going out. Big tires are costly. But they save the extra, over and over, in cost of tire upkeep.

We could save \$60 on Reo the Fifth by using smaller tires. But your cost per mile would be twice as much.

Set-in Lights

All the best cars now have set-in dash lights—electric lights—instead of projecting oil lamps.

Note all the fine models. Projecting lamps, by

another year, will be sadly out-of-date. Reo the Fifth, like all the best cars, abandoned them this year.

Fine Finish

Cars are also coming to lasting finish. Reo the Fifth has a 17-coated body. It has genuine leather upholstery, filled with the best curled hair. Even the engine is nickel trimmed. And every detail shows the final touch.

Cars skimmed in these things, however well they look today, will very soon look shabby.

Watch these features. They are visible, conspicuous. The lack of them, to every man who sees it, marks a passing type of car.

Better-Built Cars

Men are also coming to well-built cars. By the Reo standard, this is what that means.

Our steel is made to formula. Each lot is analyzed twice.

Gears are tested in a crushing machine of 50 tons' capacity. Springs are tested for 100,000 vibrations.

All driving parts are made one-half stronger than necessary. That leaves a vast margin of safety.

Each engine is given— for 48 hours—five very radical tests.

Costly Parts

We use 15 roller bear-

ings, 11 of them Timkens. Common ball bearings would cost one-fifth as much.

We use 190 drop forgings, to avoid risk of flaws. Steel castings cost half as much.

We use a \$75 magneto, a doubly-heated carburetor, a smokeless oiling system, a centrifugal pump.

We build slowly and carefully, grind parts over and over, employ countless tests and inspections.

Does It Pay?

A car without these extremes, on fair roads for one summer, may serve

about as well as the Reo. But the second year brings costly repairs. From that time on the upkeep is excessive.

I am building a car to run in five years as well as it runs when new. It is costly to build, but I save the extra by building a single model.

Thus we offer a car, built as I describe, at a price which none will match. Will it pay to get a lesser car?

Sold by a thousand dealers. Write for our catalog and we will direct you to the nearest Reo showroom.

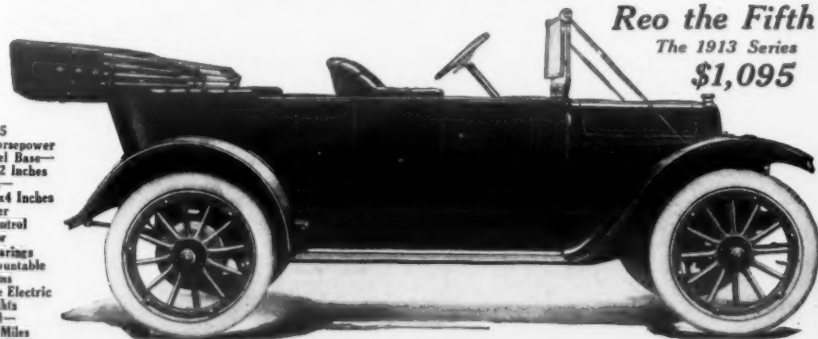
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(196)



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**TRY IT AT OUR RISK. READ OUR GUARANTEE;
\$1000 IF WE FAIL.**

Here's good news at last for men and women whose hair is falling, who are growing bald and gray, whose scalps are covered with dandruff that nothing seems to keep away and whose heads itch like mad.

Good news even for those who imagine themselves hopelessly and incurably bald or who suffer from hair or scalp trouble of any kind.

We have secured the sole American rights for the great English discovery, Crystolis, the new hair remedy that in Europe has been called the most wonderful discovery of the century, having been awarded Gold Medals at the big Paris and Brussels expositions.

Already, since securing the American rights hundreds of men and women have written us to tell of phenomenal results obtained by its use. People who have been bald for years tell how they now glory in their beautiful hair. Others who have had dandruff all their lives say they have now a clean, healthy scalp and that hair stopped falling after a few applications of this wonderful new treatment.

We don't care whether you are bothered with falling hair, prematurely gray hair, matted hair or stringy hair; dandruff, itching scalp, or any or all forms of hair trouble, we want you to try "CRYSTOLIS," at our risk.

Here are just a few statements from others who doubted, who were convinced, and who now write to tell what Crystolis has done for them.

Rev. Campbell, N. Y., writes:—"It seems incredible,

after using so many things for my hair, but am delighted to say Crystolis has stopped the itching and a fine growth of new hair has appeared."

Mr. Morse, Boston, Mass., states:—"I lost my hair 18 years ago. After using Crystolis my head was covered with a thick growth of hair of natural color. No more itching, no more falling hair, no more dandruff."

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We give you a binding guarantee without any "strings" or red tape, that it won't cost you a cent if we do not prove to you that "Crystolis" will do all we claim for it. We have deposited \$1000 in our local bank as a special fund to be forfeited if we fail to comply with this contract. Cut out the coupon below and mail it today to the Cresio Laboratories, 400 U Street, Binghamton, N. Y.

FREE COUPON

The Cresio Laboratories, 400 U Street, Binghamton, N. Y.

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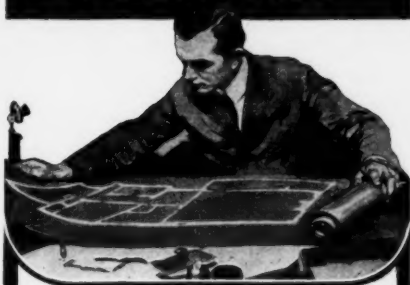
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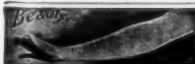


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Harmless and Positive. No Failure. Your reduction is assured—reduce to stay. One month's treatment \$6.00. Mail or office. 1270 Broadway, New York. A PERMANENT REDUCTION GUARANTEED.

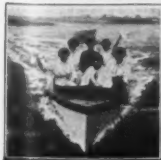
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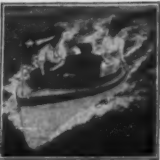


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Would you like to think that your oldest corns would be ended forever next week?

They can be ended in a simple way. A million corns monthly are ended in this way.

Apply a little Blue-jay plaster. That ends the pain, and from that time on you simply forget the corn.

In 48 hours take the plaster off. Then lift out the corn. There will be no pain or soreness.

The B & B wax gently loosens the corn so it comes out root and all.

And that corn won't come back. Another corn may come if you still pinch your feet, but the corn that comes out is ended.

Millions believe this because they have done it. Millions of others still pitter with corns. Please, for your own sake, make a test of this scientist's invention.

A in the picture is the soft B & B wax. It loosens the corn.
B stops the pain and keeps the wax from spreading.
C wraps around the toe. It is narrowed to be comfortable.
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Blue-jay Corn Plasters

Sold by Druggists—15c and 25c per package

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(316)



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In 48 to 72 Hours Yes, positively permanently banished almost before you know it. Pleasant, easy to take. Results quick, sure, lasting. No craving for tobacco in any form after first dose. Not a substitute. Harmless, no poisonous habit forming drugs. Satisfactory results guaranteed in every case or money refunded. Tobacco Redeemer is the only absolutely scientific and thoroughly dependable tobacco remedy ever discovered. Write for free booklet and positive proof.

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Positively cures Freckles, Sunburn, Pimples, Ringworms and all imperfections of the skin and prevents wrinkles. Does not merely cover up but eradicates them.

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Hose Supporter,
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**These Girls Needed Help
—and They Got It**

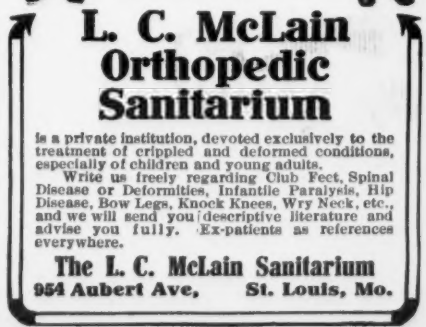
They are JANE SHIELDS, daughter of Mrs. J. N. Shields, Broad Ford, Penn., and PINK VOSBURG, daughter of Mrs. Sula Vosburg, Bedford, Iowa. Both of these girls had Infantile Paralysis; could neither walk nor stand alone when brought to this Sanitarium. After being here 8 months, they can now walk everywhere—with out braces or crutches. These are not selected cases and neither are the results unusual. Write their mothers; they will affirm the above. The



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This coupon accompanied by 10 cents in silver or stamps to help pay postage, packing, etc., entitles any man or woman ten pounds or more underweight to one Full Size 50c Package of Sargol absolutely free. Enclose this Coupon with your name and address and mail to the Sargol Co., 400-F Herald Building, Binghamton, N. Y.



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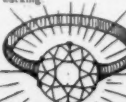
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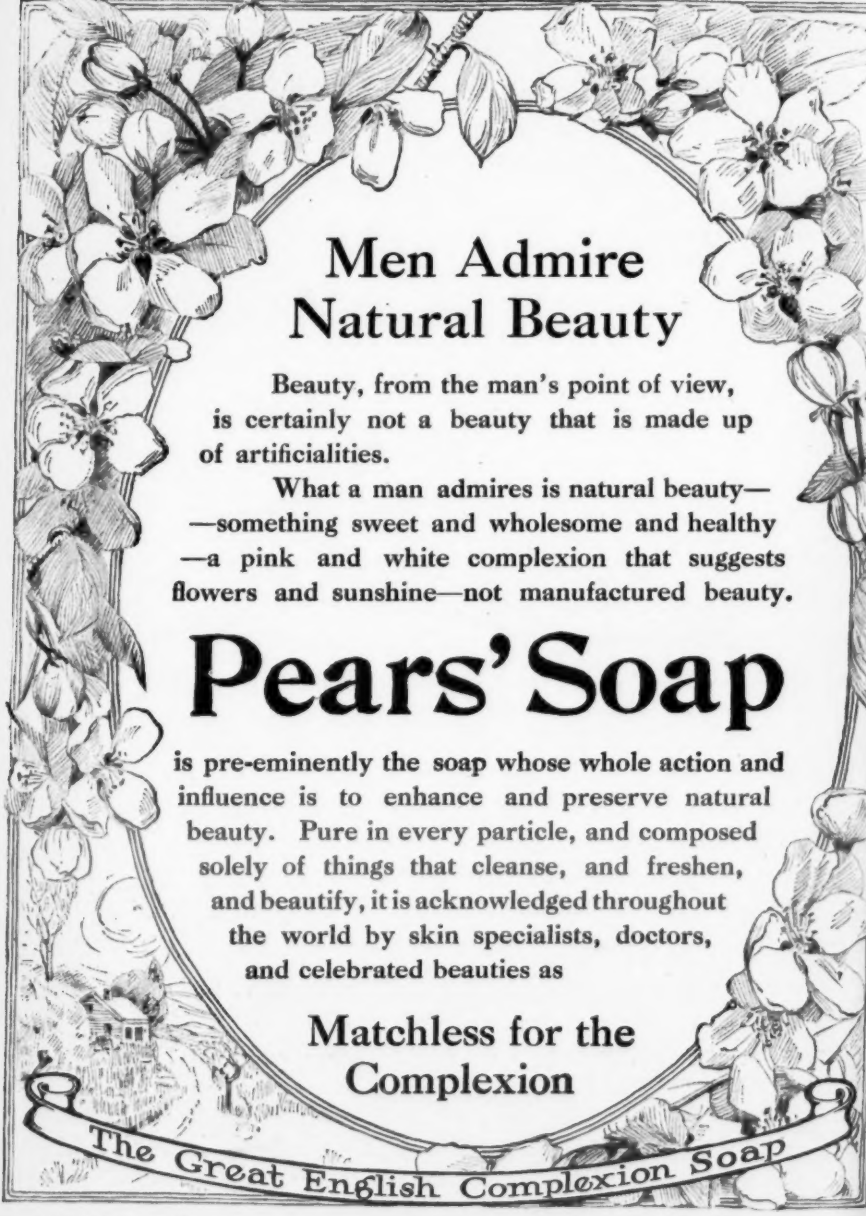
At the most critical time, the nearest telephone connected and working in the Bell System affords instant communication with distant places.

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R. J. REY



5c

— gets you
acquainted
with the
tippy red
bag.



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You pass up the "hot-stuff" brands, forget that parched throat and dark brown taste and thumping head. You never will know how a real pipe smoke tastes until you fire up some Prince Albert—tobacco that just puts a jimmy pipe in a man's

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Doesn't take eight Sundays to get acquainted with P. A. either in a jimmy pipe or rolled up into a delicious cigarette. No, sir, it's pretty much like putting on a pair of friendly old shoes of a morning—sort of makes you feel the sun will shine and the birds will sing and the going will be right good! P. A. can't sting! The bite's cut out by a patented process that has revolutionized pipe tobacco and set the whole man-smoking world jimmy pipe joyous! Get that P. A. flavor and fragrance and freshness into your system. It's good for what ails you!

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R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO CO.

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